THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
1800

Class BV4920
Book .B3
1900

Author

Title

Imprint

16—27179-1 GPO

A CALL

TO THE

UNCONVERTED

BY REV. RICHARD BAXTER

A CALL

TO THE

UNCONVERTED

TO

TURN AND LIVE

By REV. RICHARD BAXTER

WHO DIED A. D. 1691

PUBLISHED BY

THE BURGUM PRINTING COMPANY

315-52ND ST., PITTSBURGH, PA.

By transfer
The White House
March 3rd, 1913

CONTENTS.

B/4920
B3
1980

PAGE

A Preface to the Unsanctified, exhorting them to turn and live 3

The Text opened 9

DOCTRINE I. It is the unchangeable Law of God, that wicked men must turn or die . 10
OBJECTION. God will not be so unmerciful as to damn us—Answered . . 11
Who are wicked men, and what conversion is; and how we may know whether we are wicked or converted 14

DOCTRINE II. It is the promise of God, that the wicked shall live, if they will but turn —unfeignedly and thoroughly turn 22

DOCTRINE III. God taketh pleasure in men's conversion and salvation, but not in their death or damnation. He had rather they would turn and live, than go on and die 25

DOCTRINE IV. The Lord hath confirmed it to us by his oath, that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he turn and live; that he may leave man no pretence to question the truth of it 29
Who is it then that takes pleasure in men's sin and death? Not God, nor ministers, nor any good men 29

DOCTRINE V. So earnest is God for the conversion of sinners that he doubleth his commands and exhortations, with vehemency—"Turn ye, turn ye" . 32
Some motives to obey God's call, and turn 33

DOCTRINE VI. The Lord condescendeth to reason the case with unconverted sinners, and to ask them why they will die 38
A strange disputation. 1. For the question. 2. The disputants . . . 38
Wicked men will die, or destroy themselves 39
Sinners are certainly unreasonable 40
Their seeming reasons confuted 41
QUESTION. Why are men so unreasonable, and loath so turn, that they will thus destroy themselves?—Answered. 48

DOCTRINE VII. If after all this men will not turn, it is not the fault of God that they are condemned, but their own, even their own wilfulness. They die because they will, that is, because they will not turn 49
1. How unfit the wicked are to charge God with their damnation. It is not because God is unmerciful, but because they are cruel and merciless to themselves . 52
OBJECTION. We cannot convert ourselves—Answered 55
2. The Subtlety of Satan, the deceitfulness of sin and the folly of sinners manifested 55
3. No wonder if the wicked would hinder the conversion and salvation of others . 55
4. Man is the greatest enemy to himself 56
Man's destruction is of himself 56
The heinous aggravations of self-destruction 59
The concluding exhortation 60
Ten directions for those who had rather turn than die 62

FROM THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE

TO ALL UNSANCTIFIED PERSONS THAT SHALL READ THIS BOOK, ESPECIALLY OF MY HEARERS IN KIDDERMINSTER.

MEN AND BRETHREN—The eternal GOD, that made you for a life everlasting, and hath redeemed you by his only Son, when you had lost it and yourselves, being mindful of you in your sin and misery, hath indited the Gospel, and sealed it by his Spirit, and commanded his ministers to preach it to the world; that pardon being freely offered you, and Heaven being set before you, he might call you off from your fleshly pleasures, and from following after this deceitful world, and acquaint you with the life that you were created and redeemed for, before you are dead and past remedy. He sendeth you not prophets or apostles, that receive their message by immediate revelation, but yet he calleth you by his ordinary ministers, who are commissioned by him to preach the same Gospel which Christ and his apostles first delivered. The Lord seeth how you forget him and your latter end, and how light you make of everlasting things as men that understand not what they have to do or suffer. He seeth how bold you are in sin, how fearless of his threatenings, and how careless of your souls, and how the works of infidels are in your lives, while the belief of Christians is in your mouths. He seeth the dreadful day at hand, when your sorrows will begin, and you must lament all this with fruitless cries in torment and desperation: then the remembrance of your folly will tear your hearts, if true conversion now prevent it not.

In compassion to your sinful miserable souls, the Lord, that better knows your case than you can know it, hath made it our duty to speak to you in his name, 2 Cor. 5:19. and to tell you plainly of your sin and misery, and what will be your end, and how sad a change you will shortly see, if yet you go on a little longer. Having bought you at so dear a rate as the blood of his Son Jesus Christ, and made you so free and general a promise of pardon, and grace, and everlasting glory; he commandeth us to tender all this to you as the gift of God, and to entreat you to consider the necessity and worth of what he offers. He sees and pities you, while you are drowned in worldly cares and pleasures, eagerly following childish toys, and wasting that short and precious time for a thing of naught, in which you should make ready for an everlasting life; and therefore he hath commanded us to call after you and tell you how you lose your labor and are about to lose your souls, and tell you what greater and better things you might certainly have if you would hearken to his call. Isa. 55:1, 2, 3. We believe and obey the voice of God; and come to you on his message, who hath charged us to preach, and be instant with you in season and out of season, to lift up our voice like a trumpet, and show you your transgressions and your sins. Isa. 58:1; 2 Tim. 4:1, 2.

But, alas! to the grief of our souls and your undoing, you stop your ears, you stiffen your necks, you harden your hearts; and send us back to God with groans, to tell him that we have done his message, but can do no good to you, nor scarcely get a sober hearing. Oh! that our eyes were as a fountain of tears, that we might lament our ignorant careless people, that have Christ, and pardon, and life, and heaven before them, and have not hearts to know or value them! that might have Christ, and grace, and glory, as well as others, if it were not for their wilful negligence and contempt! O that the Lord would fill our hearts with more compassion to these miserable souls, that we might cast ourselves even at their feet, and follow them to their houses, and speak to them with our bitter tears. For long have we preached to many of them in vain. We study *plainness,* to make them understand, and many of them will not understand us; we study serious piercing words, to make them *feel,* but they will not feel. If the *greatest* matters would work with them, we should awake them; if the *sweetest* things would work, we should entice them and win their hearts; if the most *dreadful* things would work, we should at least affright them from their wickedness; if *truth* and sincerity would take with them, we should soon convince them; if the God that made them, and Christ that bought them, might be heard, the case would soon be altered with them; if *Scripture* might be heard, we should soon prevail; if *reason,* even the best and strongest reason, might be

heard, we should not doubt but we should speedily convince them; if *experience* might be heard, even their own experience and the experience of all the world, the matter might be mended; yea, if the *conscience* within them might be heard, the case would be better with them than it is. But if nothing can be heard, what then shall we do for them? If the dreadful God of heaven be slighted, who then shall be regarded? If the inestimable love and blood of a Redeemer be made light of, what then shall be valued? If heaven have no desirable glory with them, and everlasting joys be nothing worth; if they can jest at hell, and dance about the bottomless pit, and play with the consuming fire, and that when God and man warn them of it, what shall we do for such souls as these?

Once more, in the name of the God of heaven, I shall do the message to you which he hath commanded us, and leave it in these standing lines to convert you or condemn you; to change you, or rise up in judgment against you, and to be a witness to your faces that once you had a *serious call* to turn. Hear, all you that are drudges of the world and servants of the flesh and Satan! that spend your days in looking after prosperity on earth, and drown your conscience in drinking, and gluttony, and idleness, and foolish sports; and know your sin, and yet will sin, as if you set God at defiance, and bade him do his worst and spare not! Hearken, all you that mind not God, and have no heart to holy things, and feel no savor in the word or worship of the Lord, or in the thoughts or mention of eternal life; that are careless of your immortal souls, and never bestow one hour in inquiring what case they are in, whether sanctified or unsanctified, and whether you are ready to appear before the Lord! Hearken, all you that, by sinning in light, have sinned yourselves into infidelity and do not believe the word of God. He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear the gracious and yet dreadful call of God! His eye is all the while upon you. Your sins are registered, and you shall surely hear of them again. God keepeth the book now; and He will write it upon your consciences with his terrors; and then you also shall keep it yourselves! O sinners, that you but knew what you are doing, and whom you are all this while offending! The sun itself is darkness before the glory of that Majesty which you daily abuse and carelessly provoke. The sinning angels were not able to stand before him, but were cast down to be tormented with devils. And dare such worms as you so carelessly offend, and set yourselves against your maker! O that you did but a little know what a case that wretched soul is in, that hath engaged the living God against him! The word of his mouth that made thee, can unmake thee; the frown of his face will cut thee off and cast thee out into outer darkness. How eager are the devils to be doing with thee, that have tempted thee, and do but wait for the word from God to take and use thee as their own! and then in a moment thou wilt be in hell. If God be against thee, all things are against thee: this world is but thy prison, for all thou so lovest it; thou art but reserved in it to the day of wrath, Job 21:30; the Judge is coming, thy soul is even going. Yet a little while, and thy friend shall say of thee, "He is dead;" and thou shalt see the things that thou now dost despise, and feel that which now thou wilt not believe. Death will bring such an argument as thou canst not answer; an argument that shall effectually confute thy cavils against the word and ways of God. And then how soon will thy mind be changed. Then be an unbeliever if thou canst; stand then to all thy former words, which thou wast wont to utter against a holy and a heavenly life. Make good that cause then before the Lord which thou wast wont to plead against thy teachers, and against the people that feared God. Then stand to thy old opinions and contemptuous thoughts of the diligence of the saints; make ready now thy strong reasons, and stand up then before the Judge and plead like a man for thy fleshly, thy worldly, thy ungodly life. But know that thou wilt have One to plead with that will not be outfaced by thee; nor so easily put off as we thy fellow-creatures.

O deceived, wretched soul! there is nothing but a slender veil of flesh between thee and that amazing sight, which will quickly silence thee, and turn thy tone, and make thee of another mind! As soon as death hath drawn this curtain, thou shalt see that which will quickly leave thee speechless. And how quickly will that day and hour come! When thou hast had but a few more merry hours, and but a few more pleasant draughts and morsels, and a little more of the honors and riches of the world, thy portion will be spent, and thy pleasures ended, and all is then gone that thou settest thy heart upon: of all that thou soldest thy Saviour and salvation for, there is nothing left but the heavy reckoning. As a thief, that sits merrily spending the money which he hath stolen in an alehouse, when men are riding in posthaste to apprehend him, so is it with you. While you are drowned in cares of fleshly pleasures, and making merry with your own shame, death is coming in posthaste to seize upon you, and carry your soul to such a place and state as now you little know or think of. Suppose, when you are bold and busy in your sin, that a messenger were but coming posthaste to apprehend you and take away your life; though you saw him not, yet if you knew that he was coming, it would mar your mirth, and you would be thinking of the haste he makes, and hearkening when he knocked at your door. O that you could but see what haste Death makes, though he has not yet overtaken you! No post so swift; no messenger more sure. As sure as the sun will be with you in the morning,

though it hath many thousand and hundred thousand miles to go in the night, so sure will Death be quickly with you; and then where is your sport and pleasure? Then will you jest and brave it out? Then will you jeer at them that warned you? Then is it better to be a believing saint, or a sensual worldling? And then whose shall all these things be that you have gathered? Luke 12:19-21. Do you not observe that days and weeks are quickly gone, and nights and mornings come apace, and speedily succeed each other? You sleep, but your damnation slumbereth not; you linger, but your judgment this long time lingereth not, to which you are reserved for punishment. 2 Pet. 2:3-9. O that you were wise to understand this, and that you did consider your latter end! Deut. 32:29. He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear the call of God in this day of his salvation.

O careless sinners! that you did but know the love that you unthankfully neglect, and the preciousness of the blood of Christ which you despise! O that you did know the riches of the Gospel! O that you did but know a little the certainty, and the glory and blessedness of that everlasting life, which now you will not set your hearts upon, nor be persuaded first and diligently to seek. Heb. 11:6, and 12:28, and Matt. 6:13. Did you but know the endless life with God which you now neglect, how quickly would you cast away your sin, how quickly would you change your mind and life, your course and company, and turn the streams of your affections, and lay out your care another way. How resolutely would you scorn to yield to such temptaitons as now deceive you and carry you away. How zealously would you bestir yourselves for that most blessed life. How earnest would you be with God in prayer. How diligent in hearing, learning, and inquiring. How serious in meditating on the laws of God. Psa. 1:2. How fearful of sinning in thought, word, or deed; and how careful to please God and grow in holiness. O what a changed people you would be! And why should not the certain word of God be believed by you, and prevail with you, which openeth to you these glorious and eternal things?

Yea, let me tell you that even here on earth you little know the difference between the life you refuse and the life you choose. The sanctified are conversing with God when you dare scarce think of him, and when you are conversing with but earth and flesh. Their conversation is in heaven, when you are utter strangers to it, and your belly is your god and you are minding earthly things. Phil. 3:18-20. They are seeking after the face of God, when you seek for nothing higher than this world. They are busily laying up for an endless life, where they shall be equal with the angels, Luke 20:36, when you are taken up with a shadow and a transitory thing of naught. How long and base is your earthly, fleshly, sinful life, in comparison of the noble spiritual life of true believers. Many a time have I looked on such men with grief and pity, to see them trudge about the world, and spend their lives, and care and labor for nothing but a little food and raiment, or a little fading pelf, or fleshly pleasures, or empty honors, as if they had no higher things to mind. What difference is there between the lives of these men and of the beasts that perish, that spend their time in working, and eating, and living but that they may live? They taste not the inward heavenly pleasures which believers taste and live upon. I had rather have a little of their comfort, which the forethoughts of their heavenly inheritance afford them, though I had all their scorn and suffering with it, than to have all your pleasures and treacherous prosperity. I would not have one of your secret pangs of conscience, and dark and dreadful thoughts of death and the life to come, for all that ever the world hath done for you or all that you can reasonably hope that it should do. If I were in your unconverted carnal state, and knew but what I know, and believed but what I now believe, methinks my life would be a foretaste of hell. How oft should I be thinking of the terrors of the Lord and of the dismal day that is hastening on! Sure death and hell would be still before me. I should think of them by day, and dream of them by night; I should lie down in fear, and rise in fear, and live fear, lest death should come before I were converted. I should have small felicity in anything that I possessed, and little pleasure in any company, and little joy in anything in the world, as long as I knew myself to be under the curse and wrath of God. I should be still afraid of hearing that voice, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee." Luke 12:20. And that fearful sentence would be written upon my conscience, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Isa. 48:22; 57:21.

O poor sinners! It is a more joyful life than this that you might live if you were but willing, but truly willing to hearken to Christ, and come home to God. You might then draw near to God with boldness, and call him your Father, and comfortably trust him with your souls and bodies. If you look upon the promises, you may say, They are all mine. If upon the curse, you may say, From this I am delivered. When you read the law, you may see what you are saved from. When you read the Gospel, you may see him that redeemed you, and see the course of his love, and holy life, and sufferings, and trace him in his temptations, tears, and blood, in the work of your salvation. You may see death conquered and heaven opened, and your resurrection and glorification provided for in the resurrection and glorification of your Lord. If you look on the saints, you may say. They are my brethren and companions. If on the unsanctified, you

may rejoice to think that you are saved from that state. If you look upon the heavens, the sun, and moon, and stars innumerable, you may think and say, My Father's face is infinitely more glorious; it is higher matters that he hath prepared for his saints; yonder is but the outward court of heaven. The blessedness that he hath promised me is so much higher, that flesh and blood cannot behold it. If you think of the grave, you may remember that the glorified Spirit, a living Head, and a loving Father, have all so near a relation to your dust, that it cannot be forgotten or neglected, but will more certainly revive than the plants and flowers in the spring: because the soul is still alive, which is the root of the body; and Christ is alive, which is the root of both. Even death, which is the king of fears, may be remembered and entertained with joy, as being the day of your deliverance from the remnant of sin and sorrow; the day which you believed, and hoped, and waited for, when you shall see the blessed things which you had heard of, and shall find by present joyful experience what it was to choose the better part, and to be a sincere believing saint. What say you, sirs? Is not this a more delightful life, to be assured of salvation and ready to die, than to live as the ungodly, that have their hearts overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day comes upon them unawares? Luke 21:34, 36. Might you not live a comfortable life, if once you were made the heirs of heaven, and sure to be saved when you leave the world? O look about you, then, and think what you do, and cast not away such hopes as these for very nothing. The flesh and the world can give you no such hopes or comforts.

I have but three requests to you, and I have done.

1. That you will seriously read over this small treatise, and if you have such as need it in your families, that you will read it over and over to them; and if those that fear God would go now and then to their ignorant neighbors, and read this or some other book to them on this subject, they might be a means of winning souls. If we cannot entreat so small a labor of men for their own salvation as to read such short instructions as these, they set little by themselves, and will most justly perish.

2. When you have read over this book, I would entreat you to go alone and ponder a little what you have read, and bethink you, as in the sight of God, whether it be not true, and do not nearly touch your souls, and whether it be not time to look about you. And also entreat you, that you will upon your knees beseech the Lord that he will open your eyes to understand the truth, and turn your hearts to the love of God, and beg of him all that saving grace which you have so long neglected, and follow it on from day to day, till your hearts be changed. And withal, that you will go to your pastors—that are set over you to take care of the health and safety of your souls, as physicians do for the health of your bodies—and desire them to direct you what course to take, and acquaint them with your spiritual state, that you may have the benefit of their advice and ministerial help.

If you have not a faithful pastor at home, make use of some other in so great a need.

3. When, by reading, consideration, prayer, and ministerial advice, you are once acquainted with your sin and misery, with your duty and remedy, delay not, but presently forsake your sinful company and courses, and turn to God and obey his call. As you love your souls, take heed that you go not on against so loud a call of God, and against your own knowledge and conscience, lest it go worse with you in the day of judgment than with Sodom and Gomorrah. Inquire of God, as a man that is willing to know the truth, and not be a wilful cheater of his soul. Search the holy Scriptures daily, and see whether these things be so: try impartially whether it be safer to trust heaven or earth, and whether it be better to follow God or man, the Spirit or the flesh, better to live in holiness or sin, and whether an unsanctified state be safe for you to abide in one day longer; and when you have found out which is best, resolve accordingly, and make your choice without any more ado. If you will be true to your own souls, and do not love everlasting torments, I beseech you as from the Lord, that you will but take this reasonable advice. Then at your deathbed how boldly might we comfort and encourage your departing souls! And at your burial, how comfortably might we leave you in the grave, in expectation to meet your souls in heaven, and to see your bodies raised to that glory!

But, if still the most of you will go on in a careless, ignorant, worldly, or unholy life, and all our desires and labors cannot so far prevail as to keep you from the wilful damning of yourselves, we must then imitate our Lord, who delighteth himself in those few that are jewels, and in a little flock that shall receive the kingdom, when the most shall reap the misery which they sowed. In nature, excellent things are few. The world hath not many suns or moons; it is but a little of the earth that is gold or silver. Princes and nobles are but a small part of the sons of men: it is no great number that are learned, judicious, or wise, here in this world. And, therefore, if the gate being strait and very narrow, there be but few that find salvation, yet God will have his glory and pleasure in those few. And when Christ shall come with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, his coming will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all true believers. 2 Thess. 1:7-10.

And for the rest, as God the Father vouchsafed to create them, and God the Son disdained not to bear the penalty of their sins upon the cross, and did not judge such sufferings vain, though he knew that by refusing the sanctification of the Holy Ghost they would finally destroy themselves, so we, that are his ministers, though these be not gathered, judge not our labor wholly lost. See Isa. 49:5.

Reader, I have done with thee, when thou hast perused this book, but sin hath not yet done with thee, even those that thou thoughtest had been forgotten long ago; and Satan hath not yet done with thee, though now he be out of sight; and God hath not yet done with thee, because thou wilt not be persuaded to have done with deadly reigning sin. I have written thee this persuasive, as one that is going into another world, where the things are seen that I here speak of, and as one that knoweth thou must be shortly there thyself. As ever thou wilt meet me with comfort before the Lord that made us; as ever thou wilt escape the everlasting plagues prepared for the final neglecters of salvation, and for all that are not sanctified by the Holy Ghost, and love not the communion of the saints as members of the holy Catholic church; and as ever thou hopest to see the face of Christ the Judge, and of the majesty of the Father, with peace and comfort, and to be received into glory when thou art turned naked out of this world; I beseech thee, I charge thee, to hear and obey the CALL of God, and resolvedly to turn, that thou mayest live. But, if thou wilt not, even when thou hast no true reason for it but because thou wilt not, I summon thee to answer it before the Lord, and require thee there to bear me witness that I gave thee warning, and that thou wast not condemned for want of a call to turn and live, but because thou wouldst not believe it, and obey it; which also must be the testimony of thy serious monitor.

RICHARD BAXTER.

December 11, 1657.

A CALL TO THE UNCONVERTED.

Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? EZEKIEL 33:11.

It hath been the astonishing wonder of many a man as well as me, to read in the Holy Scripture how few will be saved, and that the greatest part even of those that are called, will be everlastingly shut out of the kingdom of heaven, and be tormented with the devils in eternal fire. Infidels believe not this when they read it, and therefore they must feel it: those that do believe it are forced to cry out with Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Rom. 11:33. But nature itself doth teach us all to lay the blame of evil works upon the doers; and therefore when we see any heinous thing done, a principle of justice doth provoke us to inquire after him that did it, that the evil of the work may return the evil of shame upon the author. If we saw a man killed and cut in pieces by the way, we should presently ask, O! who did this cruel deed? If the town was wilfully set on fire, you would ask, What wicked wretch did this? So when we read that many souls will be miserable in hell for ever, we must needs think with ourselves, How comes this to pass? and whose fault is it? Who is it that is so cruel as to be the cause of such a thing as this? and we can meet with few that will own the guilt. It is indeed confessed by all, that Satan is the cause; but that doth not resolve the doubt, because he is not the principal cause. He doth not force men to sin, but tempts them to it, and leaves it to their own wills whether they will do it or not. He doth not carry men to an alehouse and force open their mouths and pour in the drink; nor doth he hold them that they cannot go to God's service; nor doth he force their hearts from holy thoughts. It lieth therefore between God himself, and the sinner; one of them must needs be the principal cause of all this misery, whichever it is, for there is no other to lay it upon; and God disclaimeth it, he will not take it upon him; and the wicked disclaim it usually, and they will not take it upon them, and this is the controversy that is here managing in my text.

The Lord complaineth of the people; and the people think it is the fault of God. The same controversy is handled, chap. 18:25; they plainly say, "that the way of the Lord is not equal." So here they say, verse 19, "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how shall we then live?" As if they should say, If we must die and be miserable, how can we help it? as if it were not their fault, but God's. But God, in my text, doth clear himself of it, and telleth them how they may help it if they will, and persuadeth them to use the means, and if they will not be persuaded, he lets them know that it is the fault of themselves; and if this will not satisfy them, he will not forbear to punish them. It is he that will be the Judge, and he will judge them according to their ways; they are no judges of him or of themselves, they want authority, and wisdom, and impartiality; nor is it their cavilling and quarrelling with God that shall serve their turn, or save them from the execution of that justice at which they murmur.

The words of this verse contain, 1. God's clearing himself from the blame of their destruction. This he doth not by disowning his law that the wicked shall die, nor by disowning his judgment and execution according to that law, or giving them any hope that the law shall not be executed; but by professing that it is not their death that he takes pleasure in, but their returning rather, that they may live; and this he confirmeth to them by his oath. 2. An express exhortation to the wicked to return; wherein God doth not only command, but persuade and condescend also to reason the case with them. Why will they die? The direct end of this exhortation is, that they may turn and live. The secondary or reserved ends, upon the supposition that this is not attained, are these two: 1. To convince them by the means which he used, that it is not the fault of God if they are miserable. 2. To convince them, from their manifest wilfulness in rejecting all his commands and persuasions, that it is the fault of themselves, and that they die, even because they will die.

The substance of the text doth lie in these observations following:

Doctrine 1. It is the unchangeable law of God, that wicked men must turn or die.

Doctrine 2. It is the promise of God, that the wicked shall live, if they will but turn.

Doctrine 3. God takes pleasure in men's conversion and salvation, but not in their death or damnation: he had rather they would return and live, than go on and die.

Doctrine 4. This is a most certain truth, which, because God would not have men to question, he hath confirmed it to them solemnly by his oath.

Doctrine 5. The Lord doth redouble his commands and persuasions to the wicked to turn.

Doctrine 6. The Lord condescendeth to reason the case with them; and asketh the wicked why they will die?

Doctrine 7. If after all this the wicked will not turn, it is not the fault of God that they perish, but of themselves; their own wilfulness is the cause of their damnation; they therefore die because they will die.

Having laid open the text in these propositions, I shall next speak somewhat of each of them in order, though briefly.

DOCTRINE I.

It is the unchangeable Law of God, that wicked men must turn or die.

If you will believe God, believe this: there is but one of these two ways for every wicked man, either conversion or damnation. I know the wicked will hardly be persuaded either of the truth or equity of this. No wonder if the guilty quarrel with the law. Few men are apt to believe that which they would not have to be true, and fewer would have that to be true which they apprehend to be against them. But it is not quarrelling with the law, or with the judge, that will save the malefactor. Believing and regarding the law might have prevented his death; but denying and accusing it will but hasten it. If it were not so, a hundred would bring their reason against the law, for one that would bring his reason to the law, and men would rather choose to give their reasons why they should not be punished, than to hear the commands and reasons of their governors which require them to obey. The law was not made for you to judge, but that you might be ruled and judged by it.

But if there be any so blind as to venture to question either the truth

or **the justice** of this law of God, I shall briefly give you that evidence of both which methinks should satisfy a reasonable man. And,

I. If you doubt whether this be **the word of God** or not, besides a hundred other texts, you may be satisfied by these few: Matt. 18:3. "Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." John 3:3. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." 2 Cor. 5:17. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Col. 3:9, 10. "Ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Heb. 12:14. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Rom. 8:8, 9. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Now, if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Gal. 6:15. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." I Pet. 1:3. "According to his abundant mercy, he hath begotten us to a lively hope." Ver. 23. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." 1 Pet. 2:1, 2. "Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies and envies, and all evil speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." Psa. 9:17. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Psa. 11:5. "And the Lord trieth the righteous, but the wicked his soul hateth.

As I need not stay to open these texts which are so plain, so I think I need not add any more of that multitude which speak the like. If thou be a man that dost believe the word of God, here is already enough to satisfy thee that the wicked must be converted or condemned. You are already brought so far that you must either confess that this is true, or say plainly, you will not believe the word of God. And if once you come to that pass there is but small hope of you: look to yourself as well as you can, for it is likely you will not be long out of hell. You would be ready to fly in the face of him that should give you the lie; and yet dare you give the lie to God? But if you tell God plainly you will not believe him, blame him not if he never warn you more, or if he forsake you, and give you up as hopeless; for to what purpose should he warn you, if you will not believe him? Should he send an angel from heaven to you, it seems you would not believe. For an angel can speak but the word of God; and if an angel should bring you any other gospel, you are not to receive it, but to hold him accursed. Gal. 1:8. And surely, there is no angel to be believed before the Son of God, who came from the Father to bring us this doctrine. If he be not to be believed, then all the angels in heaven are not to be believed. And if you stand on these terms with God, I shall leave you till he deal with you in a more convincing way. God hath a voice that will make you hear. Though he entreat you to hear the voice of his Gospel, he will make you hear the voice of his condemning sentence, without entreaty. We cannot make you believe against your wills; but God will make you feel against your wills.

But let us hear what reason you have why you will not believe this word of God, which tells us that the wicked must be converted, or condemned. I know your reason; it is because you judge it unlikely that God should be so unmerciful: you think it cruelty to damn men everlastingly for so small a thing as a sinful life. And this leads us,

II. To justify **the equity of God** in his laws and judgments.

1. I think you will not deny that it is most **suitable** to an immortal soul to be ruled by laws that promise an immortal reward, and threaten an end-

less punishment. Otherwise the law would not be suited to the nature of the subject, who will not be fully ruled by any lower means than the hopes or fears of everlasting things: as it is in cases of temporal punishment, if a law were now made that the most heinous crimes should be punished with a hundred years' captivity, this might be of some efficacy as being equal to our lives. But, if there had been no other penalties before the flood, when men lived eight or nine hundred years, it would not have been sufficient, because men would know that they might have so many hundred years' impunity afterwards. So it is in our present case.

2. I suppose that you will confess that the **promise** of an endless and inconceivable glory is not unsuitable to the wisdom of God or the case of **man**; and why then should you not think so of the **threatening** of an endless and unspeakable misery?

3. When you find it in the word of God that so it is, and so it will be, do you think **yourselves** fit to **contradict** this word? Will you call your Maker to the bar, and examine his word upon the accusation of falsehood? Will you sit upon him and judge him by the law of your conceits? Are you wiser, and better, and more righteous than he? Must the God of heaven come to school to you to learn wisdom? Must Infinite Wisdom learn of folly, and Infinite Goodness be corrected by a sinner that cannot keep himeslf an hour clean? Must the Almighty stand at the bar of a worm? O horrid arrogancy of senseless dust! Shall a mole, or clod, or dunghill, accuse the sun of darkness, and undertake to illuminate the world? Where were you when the Almighty made the laws, that he did not call you to his counsel? Surely, he made them before you were born, without desiring your advice; and you came into the world too late to reverse them, if you could have done so great a work. You should have stepped out of your nothingness and have contradicted Christ when he was on earth, or Moses before him, or have saved Adam and his sinful progeny from the threatened death, that so there might have been no need of Christ. And what if God withdraw his patience and sustaining power, and let you drop into hell while you are quarrelling with his word, will you then believe that there is a hell?

4. If sin be such an evil that it requireth the death of Christ for its expiation, no wonder if it deserve our everlasting misery.

5. And if the sin of devils deserve an endless torment, why not also the sin of man?

6. And methinks you should perceive that it is not possible for the best of men, much less for the wicked, to be **competent judges** of the desert of sin. Alas! we are both blind and partial. You can never know fully the desert of sin, till you fully know the evil of sin; and you can never fully know the evil of sin, till you fully know, 1. The excellency of the soul which it deformeth. 2. The excellency of holiness which it obliterates. 3. The reason and excellency of the law which it violates. 4. The excellency of the glory which it despises. 5. The excellency and office of reason which it treadeth down. 6. No, nor till you know the infinite excellency, almightiness, and holiness of that God against whom it is committed. When you fully know all these, you shall fully know the desert of sin. Besides, you know that the offender is too partial to judge the law or the proceedings of his judge. We judge by feeling, which blinds our reason. We see, in common worldly things, that most men think the cause is right which is their own, and that all is wrong that is done against them; and let the most wise, or just, or impartial friends persuade them to the contrary, and it is all in vain. There are few children but think the father is unmerciful, or dealeth hardly with them, if he whip them. There is scarce the vilest wretch but thinketh the

church doth wrong him if they excommunicate him; or scarce a thief or murderer that is hanged; but would accuse the law and judge of cruelty, if that would serve their turn.

7. Can you think that unholy souls are fit for heaven? Alas, they cannot love God here, nor do him any service which he can accept. They are contrary to God, they loathe that which he most loveth, and love that which he abhorreth. They are incapable of that imperfect communion with him which his saints here partake of. How then can they live in that perfect love of him, and full delight and communion with him, which is the blessedness of heaven? You do not accuse yourselves of unmercifulness if you make not your enemy your bosom counsellor; or if you take not your swine to bed and board with you; no, nor if you take away his life, though he never sinned; and yet you will blame the absolute Lord, the most wise and gracious Sovereign of the world, if he condemn the unconverted to perpetual misery.

I beseech you now, all that love your souls, that, instead of quarrelling with God and with his word, you will presently receive it, and use it for your good. All you that are yet unconverted, take this as the undoubted truth of God: You must, ere long, be converted or condemned; there is no other way but to turn, or die. When God, that cannot lie, hath told you this; when you hear it from the Maker and Judge of the world, it is time for him that hath ears to hear. By this time you may see what you have to trust to. You are but dead and damned men, except you will be converted. Should I tell you otherwise, I should deceive you with a lie. Should I hide this from you, I should undo you, and be guilty of your blood, as the verses before my text assure me. Verse 8: "When I say to the wicked man, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." You see, then, though this be a rough and unwelcome doctrne, it is such as we must preach, and you must hear. It is easier to hear of hell than to feel it. If your necessities did not require it, we would not gall your tender ears with truths that seem so harsh and grievous. Hell would not be so full, if people were but willing to know their case, and to hear and think of it. The reason why so few escape it, is because they strive not to enter in at the strait gate of conversion, and go the narrow way of holiness while they have time; and they strive not, because they are not awakened to a lively feeling of the danger they are in; and they are not awakened, because they are loth to hear or think of it; and that is partly through foolish tenderness and carnal self-love, and partly because they do not well believe the word that threateneth it. If you will not thoroughly believe this truth, methinks the weight of it should force you to remember it, and it should follow you, and give you no rest till you are converted. If you had but once heard this word by the voice of an angel, "Thou must be cenverted or condemned: turn, or die;" would it not sink into your mind, and haunt you night and day? so that in your sinning you would remember it, as if the voice were still in your ears, "Turn, or die!" O happy were your soul if it might thus work with you, and never be forgotten or let you alone till it have driven home your heart to God. But if you will cast it out by forgetfulness or unbelief, how can it work to your conversion and salvation? But take this with you to your sorrow, though you may put this out of your mind you cannot put it out of the Bible, but there it will stand as a sealed truth, which you shall experimentally know for ever, that there is no other way but "turn, or die."

O what is the matter, then, that the hearts of sinners are not pierced with such a weighty truth? A man would think now, that every unconverted soul that hears these words should be pricked to the heart, and think with

himself, "This is my own case," and never be quiet till he found himself converted. Believe it, this drowsy, careless temper will not last long. Conversion and condemnation are both of them awakening things, and one of them will make you feel ere long. I can foretell it as truly as if I saw it with my eyes, that either grace or hell will shortly bring these matters to the point, and make you say, "What have I done? What a foolish wicked course have I taken?" The scornful and the stupid state of sinners will last but a little while: as soon as they either turn or die, the presumptuous dream will be at an end, and then their senses and feeling will return.

But I foresee there are two things that are likely to harden the unconverted and make me lose all my labor, unless they can be taken out of the way; namely, the misunderstanding of those two words, **the wicked** and **turn.** Some will think with themselves, "It is true, the wicked must turn or die; but what is that to me, I am not wicked, though I am a sinner as all men are." Others will think, "It is true that we must turn from our evil ways, but I am turned long ago; I hope this is not now to do." And thus while wicked men think they are not wicked, but are already converted, we lose all our labor in persuading them to turn. I shall therefore, before I go any further, tell you here **who are meant by the wicked,** or who they are that must turn or die; and also **what is meant by turning,** or who they are that are truly converted. And this I have purposely reserved for this place, preferring the method that fits my end. And

I. Here you may observe, that in the sense of the text **a wicked man** and a converted man are contraries: no man is a wicked man that is converted; and no man is a converted man that is wicked; so that to be a wicked man and to be an unconverted man is all one; and therefore in dealing with one we shall deal with both.

Before I can tell you what either wickedness or conversion is, I must go to the bottom and take up the matter from the beginning.

It pleased the great Creator of the world to make three sorts of living creatures. Angels he made pure spirits without flesh, and therefore he made them only for heaven, and not to dwell on earth. Brutes were made flesh without immortal souls, and therefore they were made only for earth, and not for heaven. Man is of a middle nature, between both, as partaking of both flesh and spirit, and therefore he was made both for heaven and earth. But as his flesh is made to be but a servant to his spirit, so is he made for earth but as his passage or way to heaven, and not that this should be his home or happiness. The blessed state that man was made for, was to behold the glorious majesty of the Lord, and to parise him among his holy angels, and to love him, and to be filled with his love for ever. And as this was the end that man was made for, so God gave him means that were fitted to the attaining of it.

These means were principally two: 1. The right inclination and disposition of the mind of man. 2. The right ordering of his life and practice. For the first, God suited the disposition of man unto his end, giving him such knowledge of God as was fit for his present state, and a heart disposed and inclined to God in holy love. But yet he did not fix or confirm him in this condition, but, having made him a free agent, he left him to the exercise of his own free will. For the second, God did that which belonged to him; that is, he gave him a perfect law, requiring him to continue in the love of God and perfectly to obey him.

By the wilful breach of this law, man not only forfeited his hopes of everlasting life, but also turned his heart from God and fixed it on these lower fleshly things, and thereby blotted out the spiritual image of God from his

soul; so that man both fell short of the glory of God, which was his end, and put himself out of the way by which he should have attained it, and this both as to the frame of his heart and of his life. The holy inclination and love of his soul to God he lost, and instead of it he contracted an inclination and love to the pleasing of his flesh, or carnal self, by earthly things; growing strange to God and acquainted with the creature. And the course of his life was suited to the bent and inclination of his heart; he lived to his carnal self, and not to God; he sought the creature for the pleasing of his flesh, instead of seeking to please the Lord. With this nature or corrupt inclination we are all now born into the world; "for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Job 14:4. As a lion hath a fierce and cruel nature before he doth devour; and an adder hath a venomous nature before she stings; so in our infancy we have those sinful natures or inclinations before we think, or speak, or do amiss. And hence springeth all the sin of our lives; and not only so, but when God hath of his mercy provided us a remedy, even the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the Saviour of our souls and bring us back to God again, we naturally love our present state, and are loth to be brought out of it, and therefore are set against the means of our recovery: and though custom hath taught us to thank Christ for his good-will, yet carnal self persuades us to refuse his remedies, and to desire to be excused when we are commanded to take the medicines which he offers, and are called to forsake all and follow him to God and glory.

I pray you read over this leaf again, and mark it, for in these few words you have a true description of our natural state, and consequently of a wicked man; for every man that is in the state of corrupt nature is a wicked man, and in a state of death.

II. By this you are prepared to understand **what it is to be converted:** to which end you must further know, that the mercy of God, not willing that man should perish in his sins, provided a remedy, by causing his Son to take our nature, and being in one person God and man, to become a mediator between God and man; and by dying for our sins on the cross, to ransom us from the curse of God and the power of the devil. And having thus redeemed us, the Father hath delivered us into his hands as his own. Hereupon the Father and the Mediator do make a new law and covenant for man, not like the first, which gave life to none but the perfectly obedient, and condemned man for every sin; but Christ hath made a law of grace, or a promise of pardon and everlasting life to all that, by true repentance, and by faith in Christ, are converted unto God: like an act of oblivion which is made by a prince to a company of rebels, on condition that they will lay down their arms and come in and be loyal subjects for the time to come.

But, because the Lord knoweth that the heart of man is grown so wicked, that, for all this, men will not accept of the remedy if they are left to themselves, therefore the Holy Ghost hath undertaken it as his office to inspire the apostles, and seal the Scriptures by miracles and wonders, and to illuminate and convert the souls of the elect.

So by this much you see, that as there are three persons in the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, so each of these persons have their several works, which are eminently ascribed to them.

The Father's works were, to create us, to rule us, as his rational creatures, by the law of nature, and judge us thereby; and in mercy to provide us a Redeemer when we were lost; and to send his Son, and accept his ransom.

The works of **the Son** for us were these: to ransom and redeem us by his sufferings and righteousness; to give out the promise or law of grace; and rule and judge the world as the Redeemer, on terms of grace; to make

intercession for us, that the benefits of his death may be communicated; and to send the Holy Ghost, which the Father also doth by the Son.

The works of **the Holy Ghost** for us are these: to indite the Holy Scriptures by inspiring and guiding the prophets and apostles, and sealing the word by his miraculous gifts and works; and illuminating and exciting the ordinary ministers of the Gospel, and so enabling them and helping them to publish that word; and by the same word illuminating and converting the souls of men. So that as you could not have been reasonable creatures if the Father had not created you, nor have had any access to God if the Son had not redeemed you, so neither can you have a part in Christ or be saved except the Holy Ghost do sanctify you.

So that by this time you may see the several causes of this work. The Father sendeth the Son; the Son redeemeth us and maketh the promise of grace; the Holy Ghost inditeth and sealeth this Gospel; the apostles are the secretaries of the Spirit to write it; the preachers of the Gospel to proclaim it, and persuade men to obey it; and the Holy Ghost doth make their preaching effectual, by opening the hearts of men to entertain it. And all this to repair the image of God upon the soul, and to set the heart upon God again, and take it off from the creature and carnal self to which it is revolted, and so to turn the current of the life into a heavenly course, which before was earthly; and this through embracing Christ by faith, who is the Physician of the soul.

By what I have said you may see what it is to be wicked, and what it is to be converted; which, I think, will be yet plainer to you, if I describe them as consisting of their several parts. A wicked man may be known by these three things:

1. He is one who placeth his chief affections on earth, and loveth the creature more than God, and his fleshly prosperity above the heavenly felicity. He savoreth the things of the flesh, but neither discerneth nor savoreth the things of the Spirit; though he will say that heaven is better than earth, yet he doth not really so esteem it to himself. If he might be sure of earth, he would let go heaven, and had rather stay here than be removed thither. A life of perfect holiness in the sight of God, dwelling in his love and praising him for ever in heaven, is not so pleasing to his heart as a life of health, and wealth, and honor here upon earth. And though he falsely profess that he loves God above all, yet indeed he never felt the power of divine love within him, but his mind is more set on the world or fleshly pleasures than on God. In a word, whoever loves earth above heaven, and fleshly prosperity more than God, is a wicked unconverted man.

On the other hand, a converted man is illuminated to discern the loveliness of God, and so far believeth the glory that is to be had with God, that his heart is taken up with it and set more upon it than on anything in this world. He had rather see the face of God, and live in his everlasting love and praises, than have all the wealth or pleasures of the world. He seeth that all things else are vanity, and nothing but God can fill the soul; and therefore, let the world go which way it will, he layeth up his treasures and hopes in heaven, and for that he is resolved to let go all. As the fire doth mount upward, and the needle that is touched with the loadstone still turns to the north, so the converted soul is inclined unto God. Nothing else can satisfy him: nor can he find any content and rest but in his love. In a word, all that are converted do esteem and love God better than all the world, and the heavenly felicity is dearer to them than their fleshly prosperity. The proof of what I have said you may find in these places of Scripture: Phil. 3:8-10; Matt. 6:19-21; Colos. 3:1-4; Rom. 8:5-9, 18, 23; Psalms 73:25, 26.

2. A wicked man is one that makes it the principal business of his life to prosper in the world and attain his fleshly ends. And though he may read, and hear, and do much in the outward duties of religion, and forbear disgraceful sins, yet this is all but by the by, and he never makes it the principal business of his life to please God and attain everlasting glory, but puts off God with the leavings of the world, and gives him no more service than the flesh can spare, for he will not part with all for heaven.

On the contrary, a converted man is one that makes it the principal care and business of his life to please God and to be saved, and takes all the blessings of this life but as accommodations in his journey towards another life,and useth the creature in subordination to God: he loves a holy life, and longs to be more holy; he hath no sin but what he hateth, and longeth, and prayeth, and striveth to be rid of. The drift and bent of his life is for God, and if he sin, it is contrary to the very bent of his heart and life; and therefore he riseth again and lamenteth it, and dares not wilfully live in any known sin. There is nothing in this world so dear to him but he can give it up to God, and forsake it for him and the hopes of glory. All this you may see in Col. 3:1-5; Matt. 6:20, 33; Luke 18:22, 23, 29; and 14:18, 24, 26, 27; Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:24; Luke 12:21, etc.

3. The soul of a wicked man did never truly discern and relish the mystery of redemption, nor thankfully entertain an offered Saviour, nor is he taken up with the love of the Redeemer, nor willing to be ruled by him as the Physician of his soul, that he may be saved from the guilt and power of his sins, and recovered to God; but his heart is insensible of this unspeakable benefit, and is quite against the healing means by which he should be recovered. Though he may be willing to be outwardly religious, yet he never resigned up his soul to Christ and to the motions and conduct of his word and Spirit.

On the contrary, the converted soul having felt himself undone by sin, and perceiving that he hath lost his peace with God and hopes of heaven, and is in danger of everlasting misery, doth thankfully entertain the tidings of redemption, and believing in the Lord Jesus as his only Saviour, resigns himself up to him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He takes Christ as the life of his soul, and lives by him, and uses him as a salve for every sore, admiring the wisdom and love of God in his wonderful work of man's redemption. In a word, Christ doth even dwell in his heart by faith, and the life that he now liveth, is by the faith of the Son of God, that loved him, and gave himself for him; yea, it is not so much he that liveth, as Christ in him. For these, see John 1:11, 12; and 3:19, 20; Rom. 8:9; Phil. 3:7-10; Gal. 2:20; John 15:2-4; 1 Cor. 1:20; 2:2.

You see now, in plain terms from the word of God, who are the wicked and who are the converted. Ignorant people think that if a man be no swearer, nor curser, nor railer, nor drunkard, nor fornicator, nor extortioner, nor wrong anybody in his dealings, and if he come to church and say his prayers, he cannot be a wicked man. Or if a man that hath been guilty of drunkenness, swearing, or gaming, or the like vices, do but forbear them for the time to come, they think that this is a converted man. Others think if a man that hath been an enemy, and scorner at godliness, do but approve it, and join himself to those that are godly, and be hated for it by the wicked, as the godly are, that this must needs be a converted man. And some are so foolish as to think that they are converted by taking up some new and false opinion, and falling into some dividing party. And some think, if they have but been affrighted by the fears of hell, and had convictions of conscience, and thereupon have purposed and promised amendment, and taken up a life of civil behavior and outward religion, that this must needs be true conver-

sion. And these are the poor deluded souls that are like to lose the benefit of all our persuations; and when they hear that the wicked must turn or die, they think that this is not spoken to them, for they are not wicked, but are turned already. And therefore it is that Christ told some of the rulers of the Jews who were more grave and civil than the common people, that "publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before them." Matt. 21:31. Not that a harlot or gross sinner can be saved without conversion; but because it was easier to make these gross sinners perceive their sin and misery, and the necessity of a change, than the more civil sort, who delude themselves by thinking that they are converted already, when they are not.

O sirs, conversion is another kind of work than most are aware of. It is not a small matter to bring an earthly mind to heaven, and to show man the amiable excellence of God, till he be taken up in such love to him as can never be quenched; to break the heart for sin, and make him fly for refuge to Christ, and thankfully embrace him as the life of his soul; to have the very drift and bent of the heart and life changed; so that a man renounceth that which he took for his felicity, and placeth his felicity where he never did before, and lives not to the same end, and drives not on the same design in the world, as he formerly did. In a word, he that is in Christ is a "new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Cor. 5:17. He hath a new understanding, a new will and resolution, new sorrows, and desires, and love, and delight; new thoughts, new speeches, new company—if possible—and a new conversation. Sin, that before was a jesting matter with him, is now so odious and terrible to him that he flies from it as from death. The world, that was so lovely in his eyes, doth now appear but as vanity and vexation: God, that was before neglected, is now the only happiness of his soul: before, he was forgotten, and every lust preferred before him; but now he is set next the heart, and all things must give place to him; the heart is taken up in the attendance and observance of him, is grieved when he hides his face, and never thinks itself well without him. Christ himself, that was wont to be slightly thought of, is now his only hope and refuge, and he lives upon him as on his daily bread; he cannot pray without him, nor rejoice without him, nor think, nor speak, nor live without him. Heaven itself, that before was looked upon but as a tolerable reserve, which he hoped might serve his turn better than hell when he could not stay any longer in the world, is now taken for his home, the place of his only hope and rest, where he shall see, and love, and praise that God who hath his heart already. Hell, that did seem before but as a bugbear to frighten men from sin, doth now appear to be a real misery that is not to be ventured on nor jested with. The works of holiness, of which before he was weary, and which he thought unnecessary, are now both his recreation and his business. The Bible, which was before to him but almost as a common book, is now as the law of God; as a letter written to him from heaven and subscribed with the name of the Eternal Majesty; it is the rule of his thoughts, and words, and deeds; the commands are binding, the threats are dreadful, and the promises of it speak life to his soul. The godly, that seemed to him but like other men, are now the most excellent and happy on earth. And the wicked, that were his playfellows, are now his grief; and he that could laugh at their sins is more ready now to weep for their sin and misery, and to say with those of old, Psalm 16:3; 15:4; Phil. 3:18, "But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." "In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoreth them that fear the Lord: he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." "For many walk, of whom I have told you

often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ."

In short, he hath a new end in his thoughts, and a new way in his endeavors, and therefore his heart and life are new. Before, his carnal self was his end, and his pleasure and worldly profit and credit were his way; and now, God and everlasting glory are his end, and Christ, and the Spirit, and word, and ordinances; holiness to God, and righteousness and mercy to men, these are his way. Before, self was the chief ruler, to which the matters of God and conscience must stoop and give place; and now God, in Christ, by the Spirit, word, and ministry, is the chief ruler, to whom both self and all the matters of self must give place. So that this is not a change in one, or two, or twenty points, but in the whole soul, and in the very end and bent of the conversation. A man may step out of one path into another, and yet have his face the same way, and be still going towards the same place; but it is another matter to turn quite back, and take his journey quite the contrary way, to a contrary place. So it is here: a man may turn from drunkenness, and forsake other gross disgraceful sins, and set upon some duties of religion, and yet be still going to the same end as before, loving his carnal self above all, and giving it still the government of his soul; but when he is converted, this self is denied and taken down, and God is set up, and his face is turned the contrary way; and he that before was addicted to himself, and lived to himself, is now, by sanctification, devoted to God, and liveth unto God. Before, he asked himself what he should do with his time, his talents, and his estate, and for himself he used them; but now he asketh God what he shall do with them, and useth them for him. Before, he would please God so far as might accord with the pleasure of his flesh and carnal self, but not to any great displeasure of them; but now he will please God, let flesh and self be never so much displeased. This is the great change that God will make upon all that shall be saved.

You can say that the Holy Ghost is our sanctifier; but do you know what sanctification is? Why, this is what I have now opened to you; and every man and woman in the world must have this, or be condemned to everlasting misery. They must turn or die.

Do you believe all this, sirs, or do you not? Surely, you dare not say you do not; for it is past all doubt or denial. These are not controversies, where one learned pious man is of one mind and another of another; where one party saith this, and the other saith that. Every sect among us that deserve to be called Christians are all agreed in this that I have said; and if you will not believe the God of truth, and that in a case where every sect and party do believe him, you are utterly inexcusable.

But if you do believe this, how comes it to pass that you live so quietly in an unconverted state? Do you think that you are converted? and can you find this wonderful change upon your souls? Have you been thus born again, and made new? Are not these strange matters to many of you, and such as you never felt within yourselves? You cannot tell the day or week of your change, or the very sermon that converted you, yet do you find that the work is done, that such a change indeed there is, and that you have such hearts as are before described? Alas! the most follow their worldly business, and little trouble their minds with such thoughts. And if they be but restrained from scandalous sins, and can say, "I am no whoremonger, nor thief, nor curser, nor swearer, nor tippler, nor extortioner; I go to church, and say my prayers;" they think that this is true conversion, and that they shall be saved as well as any. Alas! this is foolish cheating of yourselves.

This is too much contempt of an endless glory, and too gross neglect of your immortal souls. Can you make so light of heaven and hell?

Your body will shortly lie in the dust, and angels or devils will presently seize upon your souls; and every man or woman of you all will shortly be among other company, and in another case than now you are. You will dwell in these houses but a little longer; you will work in your shops and fields but a little longer; you will sit in these seats and dwell on this earth but a little longer; you will see with these eyes, and hear with these ears, and speak with these tongues but a little longer, till the resurrection day; and can you make shift to forget this? O what a place will you shortly be in of joy or torment! O what a sight will you shortly see in heaven or hell! O what thoughts will shortly fill your hearts with unspeakable delight or horror! What work will you be employed in! to praise the Lord with saints and angels, or to cry out in fire unquenchable with devils; and should all this be forgotten? And all this will be endless, and sealed up by an unchangeable decree. Eternity, eternity, will be the measure of your joys or sorrows: and can this be forgotten? And all this is true, sirs, most certainly true. When you have gone up and down a little longer, and slept and awakened a few times more, you will be dead and gone, and find all true that now I tell you: and yet can you now so much forget it? You shall then remember that you had this call, and that, this day, in this place, you were reminded of these things, and you will perceive them to be matters a thousand times more important than either you or I could here conceive; and yet shall they be now so much forgotten?

Beloved friends, if the Lord had not awakened me to believe and lay to heart these things myself, I should have remained in a dark and selfish state, and have perished for ever; but if he have truly made me sensible of them, it will constrain me to compassionate you as well as myself. If your eyes were so far opened as to see hell, and you saw your neighbors that were unconverted dragged thither with hideous cries: though they were such as you accounted honest people on earth, and as feared no such danger themselves; such a sight would make you go home and think of it, and think again, and make you warn all about you, as that lost worldling, Luke 16:28, would have had his brethren warned, lest they come to that place of torment.

Faith is a kind of sight; it is the eye of the soul, the evidence of things not seen. If I believe God, it is next to seeing; and therefore, I beseech you, excuse me if I be half as earnest with you about these matters as if I had seen them. If I must die to-morrow, and it were in my power to come again, from another world and tell you what I had seen, would you not be willing to hear me? and would you not believe and regard what I should tell you? If I might preach one sermon to you after I am dead, and have seen what is done in the world to come, would you not have me plainly speak the truth, and would you not crowd to hear me, and would you not lay it to heart? But this must not be; God hath his appointed way of teaching you by Scripture and ministers, and he will not humor unbelievers so far as to send men from the dead to them and alter his established way: if any man quarrel with the sun, God will not humor him so far as to set up a clearer light. Friends, I beseech you, regard me now as you would do if I should come from the dead to you; for I can give you as full assurance of the truth of what I say to you as if I had been there and seen it with my eyes: it is possible for one from the dead to deceive you; but Jesus Christ can never deceive you; the word of God delivered in Scripture, and sealed by miracles and holy workings of the Spirit, can never deceive you. Believe this, or believe nothing. Believe and obey this, or you are undone.

Now, as ever you believe the word of God, and as ever you care for the salvation of your souls, let me beg of you this reasonable request, and I beseech you deny me not: That you would now remember what has been said, and enter into an earnest search of your hearts, and say to yourselves, Is it so indeed; must I turn or die? Must I be converted or condemned? It is time for me then to look about me before it be too late. O why did I not look after this before now? Why did I ventureously put off or slumber over so great a business? Was I awake, or in my senses? O blessed God, what a mercy is it that thou didst not cut off my life all this while, before I had any certain hope of eternal life!

God forbid that I should neglect this work any longer. What state is my soul in? Am I converted, or am I not? Was ever such a change or work done upon my soul? Have I been illuminated by the word and Spirit of the Lord to see the odiousness of sin, the need of a Saviour, the love of Christ, and the excellences of God and glory? Is my heart broken or humbled within me for my former life? Have I thankfully entertained my Saviour and Lord that offered himself with pardon and life for my soul? Do I hate my former sinful life and the remnant of every sin that is in me? Do I fly from them as my deadly enemies? Do I give up myself to a life of holiness and obedience to God? Do I love it and delight in it? Can I truly say that I am dead to the world and carnal self, and that I live for God and the glory which he hath promised? Hath heaven more of my esteem and affection than earth? And is God the dearest and highest in my soul? Once, I am sure, I lived principally to the world and flesh, and God had nothing but some heartless services, which the world could spare, and which were the leavings of the flesh. Is my heart now turned another way? Have I a new design and a new end, and a new train of holy affections? Have I set my hope and heart in heaven? And is it the scope, and design, and bent of my heart to get well to heaven, and see the glorious face of God, and live in his everlasting love and praise? And when I sin, is it against the habitual bent and design of my heart? And do I conquer all gross sins, and am I weary and willing to be rid of my infirmities? This is the state of converted souls. And thus it must be with me, or I must perish. Is it thus with me indeed, or is it not? It is time to get this doubt resolved, before the dreadful Judge resolve it. I am not such a stranger to my own heart and life, but I may somewhat perceive whether I am thus converted or not: if I be not, it will do me no good to flatter my soul with false conceits and hopes. I am resolved no more to deceive myself, but endeavor to know truly whether I be converted or not; that if I be, I may rejoice in it, and glorify my gracious Lord, and comfortably go on till I reach the crown: and if I am not, that I may set myself to beg and seek after the grace that should convert me, and may turn without any more delay. For, if I find in time that I am out of the way, by the help of Christ I may turn and be recovered; but if I stay till either my heart be forsaken of God in blindness and hardness, or till I be snatched away by death, it is then too late. There is no place for repentance and conversion then: I know it must be now or never.

Sirs, this is my request to you, that you will but take your hearts to task, and thus examine them till you see, if it may be, whether you are converted or not. And if you cannot find it out by your own endeavors, go to your ministers, if they be faithful and experienced men, and desire their assistance. The matter is great; let not bashfulness nor carelessness hinder you. They are set over you to advise you for the saving of your souls, as physicians advise you for the curing of your bodies. It undoes many thousands that they think they are in the way to salvation when they are not; and think that

they are converted when it is no such thing. And then when we call to them daily to turn, they go away as they came, and think that this concerns not them; for they are turned already, and hope they shall do well enough in the way that they are in, at least if they pick the fairest path, and avoid some of the foulest steps, when, alas! all this while they live but to the world and flesh, and are strangers to God and eternal life, and are quite out of the way to heaven. And all this because we cannot persuade them to a few serious thoughts of their condition, and to spend a few hours in the examining of their states.

Are there not many self-deceivers who hear me this day, that never bestowed one hour, or quarter of an hour, in all their lives, to examine their souls, and try whether they are truly converted or not? O merciful God, that will care for such wretches that care no more for themselves, and that will do so much to save them from hell and help them to heaven, who will do so little for it themselves! If all that are in the way to hell and in the state of damnation did but know it, they durst not continue in it. The greatest hope that the devil hath of bringing you to damnation without a rescue, is by keeping you blindfold and ignorant of your state, and making you believe that you may do well enough in the way that you are in. If you knew that you were out of the way to heaven, and were lost for ever if you should die as you are, durst you sleep another night in the state that you are in? Durst you live another day in it? Could you heartily laugh or be merry in such a state? What! and not know but you may be snatched away to hell in an hour? Sure it would constrain you to forsake your former company and courses, and to betake yourselves to the ways of holiness and the communion of the saints. Sure it would drive you to cry to God for a new heart, and to seek help of those that are fit to counsel you. There are none of you surely that care not for being damned. Well, then, I beseech you, presently make inquiry into your hearts, and give them no rest till you find out your condition, that if it be good, you may rejoice in it, and go on; and if it be bad, you may presently look about you for recovery, as men that believe they must turn or die. What say you, sirs, will you resolve and promise to be at thus much labor for your own souls? Will you now enter upon this self-examination? Is my request unreasonable? Your consciences know it is not. Resolve on it, then, before you stir; knowing how much it concerneth your souls. I beseech you, for the sake of that God that doth command you, at whose bar you will all shortly appear, that you do not deny me this reasonable request. For the sake of those souls that must turn or die, I beseech you deny me not; but make it your business to understand your own condition and build upon sure ground, and know whether you are converted or not; and venture not your souls on negligent security.

But perhaps you will say, "What if we should find ourselves yet unconverted, what shall we do then?" This question leads me to my second Doctrine, which will do much to the answering of it, to which I now proceed.

DOCTRINE II.

It is the promise of God, that the wicked shall live, if they will but turn—unfeignedly and thoroughly turn.

The Lord here professeth that this is what he takes pleasure in, that the wicked turn and live. Heaven is made as sure to the converted, as hell is to the unconverted. Turn and live, is as certain a truth as turn or die. God was not bound to provide us a Saviour, nor open to us a door of hope, nor call us to repent and turn, when once we had cast ourselves away by sin. But he hath freely done it to magnify his mercy. Sinners, there are none of

you that shall have cause to go home and say I preach desperation to you. Do we use to shut the door of mercy against you? O that you would not shut it against yourselves! Do we use to tell you that God will have no mercy on you, though you turn and be sanctified? When did you ever hear a preacher say such a word? You that cavil at the preachers of the Gospel for desiring to keep you out of hell, and say that they preach desperation; tell me, if you can, when did you ever hear any sober man say that there is no hope for you, though you repent and be converted? No, it is the direct contrary that we daily proclaim from the Lord: that whoever is born again, and by faith and repentence doth become a new creature, shall certainly be saved; and so far are we from persuading you to despair of this, that we persuade you not to make any doubt of it. It is life, not death, that is the first part of our message to you; our commission is to offer salvation, certain salvation, a speedy, glorious, everlasting salvation to every one of you; to the poorest beggar as well as the greatest lord; to the worst of you, even to drunkards, swearers, worldlings, thieves, yea, to the despisers and reproachers of the holy way of salvation.

We are commanded by our Lord and Master to offer you a pardon for all that is past, if you will but now at last return and live; we are commanded to beseech and entreat you to accept the offer, and return; to tell you what preparation is made by Christ; what mercy stays for you; what patience waiteth on you; what thoughts of kindness God hath towards you; and how happy, how certainly and unspeakably happy you may be if you will. We have indeed also a message of wrath and death, yea, of a twofold wrath and death; but neither of them is our principal message. We must tell you of the wrath that is on you already, and the death that you are born under, for the breach of the law of works; but this is only to show you the need of mercy, and to provoke you to esteem the grace of the Redeemer. And we tell you nothing but the truth, which you must know; for who will seek for physic that knows not that he is sick? Our telling you of your misery is not that which makes you miserable, but would drive you to seek for mercy. It is you that have brought this death upon yourselves. We tell you also of another death, even remediless, and much greater torment, that will fall on those who will not be converted.

But as this is true, and must be told you, so it is but the last and saddest part of our message. We are first to offer you mercy, if you will turn; and it is only those that will not turn, nor hear the voice of mercy, to whom we must foretell damnation. If you will but cast away your transgressions, if you will delay no longer, but come away at the call of Christ, and be converted, and become new creatures, we have not a word of damning wrath or death to speak against you. I do here, in the name of the Lord of life, proclaim to you all that hear me this day, to the worst of you, to the greatest, to the oldest sinner, that you may have mercy and salvation, if you will but turn. There is mercy in God, there is sufficiency in the satisfaction of Christ, the promise is free, and full, and universal; you may have life, if you will but turn. But then, as you love your souls, remember what turning it is that the Scripture speaks of. It is not to mend the old house, but to pull down all, and build anew on Christ, the Rock and sure foundation. It is not to mend somewhat in a carnal course of life, but to modify the flesh and live after the Spirit. It is not to serve the flesh and the world in a more reformed way, without any scandalous disgraceful sins, and with a certain kind of religiousness; but it is to change your master, and your works, and end; and to set your face the contrary way, and do all for the life that you never saw, and

dedicate yourselves and all you have to God. This is the change that must be made, if you will live.

Yourselves are witnesses now, that it is salvation, and not damnation, that is the great doctrine I preach to you, and the first part of my message to you. Accept of this, and we shall go no farther with you; for we would not so much as affright or trouble you with the name of damnation without necessity.

But if you will not be saved, there is no remedy, but damnation must take place; for there is no middle place between the two; you must have either life or death.

And we are not only to offer you life, but to show you the grounds on which we do it, and call you to believe that God doth mean, indeed, as he speaks; that the promise is true, and extendeth conditionally to you, as well as others; and that heaven is no fancy, but a true felicity.

If you ask, Where is our commission for this offer? Among a hundred texts of Scripture, I will show it to you in these few:

You see it here in my text and the following verses, and in the 18th of Ezekiel, as plain as can be spoken; and in 2 Cor. 5:17-21, you have the very sum of our commission: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses to them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." So Mark 16:15, 16: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth," that is, with such a converting faith as is expressed, "and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned." And Luke 24:46, 47: "Thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance," which is conversion, "and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." And Acts 5:30, 31: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree: him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." And Acts 13:38, 39: "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." And lest you think this offer is restrained to the Jews, see Gal. 6:15: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." And Luke 14:17: "Come, for all things are now ready."

You see by this time that we are commanded to offer life to you all, and to tell you from God, that if you will turn, you may live.

Here you may safely trust your souls; for the love of God is the foundation of this offer, John 3:16, and the blood of the Son of God hath purchased it; the faithfulness and truth of God is engaged to make the promise good; miracles oft sealed the truth of it; preachers are sent through the world to proclaim it; and the Spirit doth open the heart to entertain it, and is itself the earnest of the full possession: so that the truth of it is past controversy, that the worst of you all, and every one of you, if you will but be converted, may be saved.

Indeed, if you will believe that you shall be saved without conversion,

then you believe a falsehood: and if I should preach that to you, I should preach a lie. This were not to believe God, but the devil and your own deceitful hearts. God hath his promise of life, and the devil hath his promise of life. God's promise is, Turn and live. The devil's promise is, you shall live whether you turn or not. The words of God are, as I have showed you, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 18:3. "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:3, 5. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Heb. 12:14. The devil's word is, "You may be saved without being born again and converted; you may get to heaven well enough without being holy, God doth but frighten you; he is more merciful than to do as he saith, he will be better to you than his word." And, alas, the gratest part of the world believe this word of the devil before the word of God; just as our sin and misery first came into the world. God said to our first parents, "if ye eat, ye shall die;" and the devil contradicted him, and said, "Ye shall not die:" and the woman believed the devil before God. So now the Lord saith, Turn, or die: and the devil saith, You shall not die, if you do but cry for God's mercy at last, and give over the acts of sin when you can practise it no longer. And this is the word that the world believes. O heinous wickedness, to believe the devil before God.

And yet that is not the worst; but blasphemously they call this believing and trusting in God, when they put him in the shape of Satan, who was a liar from the beginning; and when they believe that the word of God is a lie, they call this trusting God, and say they believe in him, and trust in him for salvation. Where did ever God say that the unregenerate, unconverted, unsanctified, shall be saved? Show me such a word in Scripture. I challenge you to do it. Why, this is the devil's word, and to believe it is to believe the devil, and is the sin that is commonly called presumption; and do you call this believing and trusting in God? There is enough in the word of God to comfort and strengthen the hearts of the sanctified, but not a word to strengthen the hands of wickedness, nor to give men the least hope of being saved though they be never sanctified.

But if you will turn, and come into the way of mercy, the mercy of the Lord is ready to entertain you. Then trust in God for salvation, boldly and confidently; for he is engaged by his word to save you. He will be a father to none but his children; and he will save none but those that forsake the world, the devil, and the flesh, and come into his family to be members of his Son, and have communion with his saints. But if they will not come in, it is the fault of themselves: his doors are open; he keeps none back; he never sent such a message as this to any of you: "It is now too late; I will not receive thee, though thou be converted." He might have done so and done you no wrong; but he did not; he doth not to this day. He is still ready to receive you, if you were but ready unfeignedly, and with all your hearts, to turn. And the fulness of this truth will yet more appear in the following doctrines, to which I shall therefore next proceed before I make any further application of this.

DOCTRINE III.

God taketh pleasure in men's conversion and salvation, but not in their death or damnation. He had rather they would turn and live, than go on and die.

"The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward," says the apostle, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 3:9. He unfeignedly willeth the conversion of all men, even of those that never will be converted, but not as absolute Lord with the fullest efficacious resolu-

tion, nor as a thing which he resolveth shall undoubtedly come to pass, or would engage all his power to accomplish. It is in the power of a prince to set a guard upon a murderer, to see that he shall not murder, and be hanged; but if, upon good reason, he forbear this, and do but send to his subjects to warn and entreat them not to be murderers, he may well say that he would not have them murder and be hanged; he takes no pleasure in it, but rather that they forbear and live, and if he do more for some upon some special reason, he is not bound to do so by all. The king may well say to all murderers and felons in the land, "I have no pleasure in your death, but rather that you would obey my laws and live; but if you will not, I am resolved, for all this, that you shall die." The judge may truly say to the murderer, "Alas, I have no delight in thy death; I had rather thou hadst kept the law and saved thy life; but seeing thou hast not, I must condemn thee, or else I should be unjust."

So, though God have no pleasure in your damnation, and therefore calls upon you to return and live, yet he hath pleasure in the demonstration of his own justice and the execution of his laws; and therefore he is, for all this, fully resolved, that if you will not be converted, you shall be condemned. If God was so much against the death of the wicked as that he were resolved to do all that he can to hinder it, then no man should be condemned; whereas Christ telleth you, that "narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." But so far God is opposed to your damnation as that he will teach you, and warn you, and set before you life and death, and offer you your choice, and command his ministers to entreat you not to destroy yourselves, but accept his mercy, and so to leave you without excuse. But if this will not do, and if still you be unconverted, he professeth to you that he is resolved on your damnation, and hath commanded us to say to you in his name, verse 8, "O wicked man, thou shalt surely die!" And Christ hath little less than sworn it, over and over, with a "verily, verily," that except you be converted and born again, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. Matt. 18:3: John 3:3. Mark that he saith, "you cannot." It is in vain to hope for it, and in vain to dream that God is willing for it; for it is a thing that cannot be.

In a word, you see the meaning of the text, that God, the great Lawgiver of the world, doth take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn and live; though yet he be resolved that none shall live but those that turn; and as a judge, ever delighteth in justice, and in manifesting his hatred of sin, though not in the misery which sinners have brought upon themselves, in itself considered.

And for the proofs of this point, I shall be very brief in them, because I suppose you easily believe it already.

1. The very gracious nature of God proclaimed, Exod. 34:6, 7, "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty," and many other passages may assure you of this, that he hath no pleasure in your death.

2. If God had more pleasure in thy death than in thy conversion and life, he would not have so frequently commanded thee in his word to turn; he would not have made thee such promises of life if thou wilt but turn; he would not have persuaded thee to it by so many reasons. The tenor of his Gospel proveth the point.

3. And his commission that he hath given to the ministers of the Gospel doth fully prove it. If God had taken more pleasure in thy damnation than in thy conversion and salvation, he would never have charged us to offer you

mercy, and to teach you the way of life, both publicly and privately; and to entreat and beseech you to turn and live; to acquaint you with your sins and foretell you of your danger; and to do all that possibly we can for your conversion, and to continue patiently so doing, though you should hate or abuse us for our pains. Would God have done this, and appointed his ordinances for your good, if he had taken pleasure in your death?

4. It is proved also by the course of his providence. If God had rather you were damned than converted and saved, he would not second his word with his works, and entice you, by his daily kindness, to himself, and give you all the mercies of this life, which are means "to lead you to repentance," Rom. 2:4, and bring you so often under his rod, to bring you to your senses; he would not set so many examples before your eyes, no, nor wait on you so patiently as he does from day to day and year to year. These are not signs of one that taketh pleasure in your death. If this had been his delight, how easily could he have had thee long ago in hell! How oft, before this, could he have cut thee down in the midst of thy sins with a curse, or oath, or lie in thy mouth, in thy ignorance, and pride, and sensuality! When thou wert last in thy drunkenness, or last deriding the ways of God, how easily could he have stopped thy breath, and tamed thee with his plagues, and made thee sober in another world! Alas! how small a matter is it for the Almighty to silence the tongue of the profanest railer, and tie the hands of the most malicious persecutor, or calm the fury of the bitterest of his enemies, and make them know that they are but worms.

If he should but frown upon thee thou wouldst drop into thy grave. If he gave commission to one of his angels to go and destroy ten thousand sinners, how quickly would it be done! How easily can he lay thee upon the bed of languishing, and make thee lie groaning there in pain, and make thee eat the words of reproach which thou hast spoken against his servants, his word, his worship, and his holy ways, and make thee send to beg their prayers whom thou didst despise in thy presumption! How easily can he lay that flesh under pains and groans, and make it too weak to hold thy soul, and make it more loathsome than the dung of the earth! That flesh which now must have what it loves, and must not be displeased though God be displeased; and must be humored in meat, and drink, and clothes, whatever God say to the contrary, how quickly would the frowns of God consume it! When thou wast passionately defending thy sin, and quarrelling with them that would have drawn thee from it, and showing thy spleen against the reprover, and pleading for the works of darkness; how easily could God have snatched thee away in a moment, and set thee before his dreadful Majesty, where thou shouldest see ten thousand times ten thousand glorious angels waiting on his throne, and have called thee there to plead thy cause, and ask thee "What hast thou now to say against thy Creator, his truth, his servants, or his holy ways? Now plead thy cause, and make the best of it thou canst. Now what canst thou say in excuse of thy sins? Now give account of thy worldliness and fleshly life, of thy time, of all the mercies thou hast had." O how thy stubborn heart would have melted, and thy proud looks be taken down, and thy countenance be appalled, and thy stout words turned into speechless silence, or dreadful cries, if God had but set thee thus at his bar, and pleaded his own cause with thee, which thou hast here so maliciously pleaded against! How easily can he at any time say to thy guilty soul, Come away, and live in that flesh no more till the resurrection, and it cannot resist! A word of his mouth would take off the poise of thy present life, and then all thy parts and powers would stand still; and if he say unto thee, Live no longer, or, Live in hell, thou couldst not disobey.

But God hath yet done none of this, but hath patiently forborne thee, and mercifully upheld thee, and given thee that breath which thou didst breathe out against him, and given those mercies which thou didst sacrifice to thy flesh, and afforded thee that provision which thou didst use to satisfy thy greedy throat; he gave thee every minute of that time which thou didst waste in idleness, or drunkenness, or worldliness; and doth not all his patience and mercy show that he desired not thy damnation? Can the candle burn without the oil? Can your houses stand without the earth to bear them? No more can you live an hour without the support of God. And why did he so long support thy life, but to see when thou wouldst bethink thee of the folly of thy ways, and return and live? Will any man purposely put arms into his enemy's hands to resist him, or hold a candle to a murderer that is killing his children, or to an idle servant that plays or sleeps the while? Surely it is to see whether thou wilt at last return and live, that God hath so long waited on thee.

5. It is further proved by the sufferings of his Son, that God taketh no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Would he have ransomed them from death at so dear a rate? Would he have astonished angels and men by his condescension? Would God have dwelt in flesh, and have come in the form of a servant, and have assumed humanity into one person with the Godhead; and would Christ have lived a life of suffering, and died a cursed death for sinners, if he had rather taken pleasure in their death? Suppose you saw him but so busy in preaching and healing of them, as you find him in Mark 3:21; or so long in fasting, as in Matt. 4; or all night in prayer, as in Luke 6:12; or praying with drops of blood trickling from him instead of sweat, as Luke 22:24; or suffering a cursed death upon the cross, and pouring out his soul as a sacrifice for our sins—would you have thought these the signs of one that delighted in the death of the wicked?

And think not to extenuate it by saying that it was only for his elect: for it was thy sin, and the sin of all the world, that lay upon our Redeemer; and his sacrifice and satisfaction is sufficient for all, and the fruits of it are offered to one as well as another. But it is true, that it was never the intent of his mind to pardon and save any that would not, by faith and repentance, be converted. If you had seen and heard him weeping and bemoaning the state of disobedience in impenitent people, Luke 19:41, 42, "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes"—or complaining of their stubbornness, as Matt. 23: 37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" or if you had seen and heard him on the cross, praying for his persecutors, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," would you have suspected that he had delighted in the death of the wicked, even of those that perish by their wilful unbelief? When God hath so loved the world—not only loved, but so loved—as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, by an effectual faith, should not perish, but have everlasting life, I think he hath hereby proved, against the malice of men and devils, that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but had rather that they would "turn and live."

6. If all this will not yet satisfy you, take His own word that he knoweth best his own mind, or at least believe his oath: but this leads me to the fourth doctrine.

DOCTRINE IV.

The Lord hath confirmed it to us by his Oath, that he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he turn and live; that he may leave man no pretence to question the truth of it.

If you dare question his word, I hope you dare not question his oath. As Christ hath solemnly protested that the unregenerate and unconverted cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 18:3; John 3:3; so God hath sworn that his pleasure is not in their death, but in their conversion and life. And as the apostle saith, Heb. 6:16-18, because he can swear by no greater, he sware by himself. "For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast." If there be any man that cannot reconcile this truth with the doctrine of predestination, or the actual damnation of the wicked, that is his own ignorance; he hath no pretence left to question or deny therefore the truth of the point in hand; for this is confirmed by the oath of God, and therefore must not be distorted, to reduce it to other points: but doubtful points must rather be reduced to it, and certain truths must be believed to agree with it, though our shallow minds hardly discern the agreement.

I do now entreat thee, if thou be an unconverted sinner that hearest these words, that thou wouldst ponder a little upon the forementioned doctrines, and bethink thyself awhile who it is that takes pleasure in thy sin and damnation. Certainly it is not God; he hath sworn for his part that he takes no pleasure in it. And I know it is not the pleasing of him that you intend. You dare not say that you drink, and swear, and neglect holy duties, and quench the motions of the Spirit to please God. That were as if you should reproach the prince, and break his laws, and seek his death, and say you did all this to please him.

Who is it, then, that takes pleasure in your sin and death? Not any that bear the image of God, for they must be like-minded to him. God knows, it is small pleasure to your faithful teachers to see you serve your deadly enemy, and madly venture your eternal state and wilfully run into the flames of hell. It is small pleasure to them to see upon your souls (in the sad effects) such blindness, and hard-heartedness, and carelessness, and presumption; such wilfulness in evil, and such unteachableness and obstinacy against the ways of life and peace. They know these are marks of death, and of the wrath of God, and they know, from the word of God, what is like to be the end of them, and therefore it is no more pleasure to them than to a tender physician to see the plague-marks broke out upon his patient. Alas, to foresee your everlasting torments, and know not how to prevent them! To see how near you are to hell, and we cannot make you believe it and consider it. To see how easily, how certainly you might escape, if we knew but how to make you willing. How fair you are for everlasting salvation, if you would but turn and do your best, and make it the care and business of your lives! But you will not do it: if our lives lay on it, we cannot persuade you to do it. We study day and night what to say to you that may convince and persuade you, and yet it is undone: we lay before you the word of God, and show you the very chapter and verse where it is written, that you cannot be saved except you be converted; and yet we leave the most of you as we find you. We hope you will

believe the word of God though you believe not us, and regard it when we show you the plain Scripture for it; but we hope in vain, and labor in vain, as to any saving change uopn your hearts! And do you think that this is a pleasant thing to us? Many a time, in secret prayer, we complain to God with sad hearts.

"Alas, Lord, we have spoken to them in thy name, but they little regard us, we have told them what thou bidst us tell them concerning the danger of an unconverted state, but they do not believe us: we have told them that thou hast protested that there is no peace to the wicked, Isa. 57:21; but the worst of them all will scarcely believe that they are wicked. We have showed them thy word, where thou hast said, that if they live after the flesh they shall die, Rom. 8:13; but they say they will believe in thee, when they will not believe thee; and that they will trust in thee, when they give no credit to thy word; and when they hope that the threatenings of thy word are false, they will yet call this a hoping in God; and though we show them where thou hast said, that when a wicked man dieth, all his hopes perish, yet we cannot persuade them from their deceitful hopes. Prov. 11:7. We tell them what a base, unprofitable thing sin is; but they love it, and therefore will not leave it. We tell them how dear they buy this pleasure, and what they must pay for it in everlasting torment: and they bless themselves, and will not believe it, but will do as the most do; and because God is merciful they will not believe him, but will venture their souls, come what will. We tell them how ready the Lord is to receive them, and this doth but make them delay their repentance and be bolder in their sin. Some of them say they purpose to repent, but they are still the same; and some say they do repent already, while yet they are not converted from their sins. We exhort them, we entreat them, we offer them our help, but we cannot prevail with them; but they that were drunkards, are drunkards still; and they that were voluptuous flesh-pleasing wretches, are such still; and they that were worldlings, are worldlings still; and they that were ignorant and proud and self-conceited, are so still. Few of them will see and confess their sin, and fewer will forsake it, but comfort themselves that all men are sinners, as if there were no difference between a converted sinner and an unconverted. Some of them will not come near us when we are willing to instruct them, but think they know enough already, and need not our instruction; and some of them will give us the hearing, and do what they list; and most of them are like dead men that cannot feel; so that when we tell them of matters of everlasting consequence, we cannot get a word of it to their hearts. If we do not obey them, and humor them in doing all that they would have us, though never so much against the word of God, they will hate us, and rail at us; but if we beseech them to confess, and forsake their sins, and save their souls, they will not do it. They would have us disobey God and damn our own souls to please them; and yet they will not turn and save their own souls to please God. They are wiser in their own eyes than all their teachers; they rage and are confident in their own way, and if we are ever so anxious we cannot change them. Lord, this is the case of our miserable neighbors, and we cannot help it; we see them ready to drop into hell, and we cannot help it; we know if they would unfeignedly turn, they might be saved, but we cannot persuade them; if we would beg it of them on our knees, we cannot persuade them to it; if we would beg it of them with tears, we cannot persuade them; and what more can we do?"

These are the secret complaints and moans that many a poor minister is compelled to make. And do you think that he hath any pleasure in this? Is it a pleasure to him to see you go on in sin, and cannot stop you? to see you so miserable, and cannot so much as make you sensible of it? to see you merry

when you are not sure to be an hour out of hell? to think what you must for ever suffer, because you will not turn? and to think what an everlasting life of glory you wilfully despise and cast away? What sadder thing can you bring to their hearts, and how can you devise to grieve them more?

Who is it, then, that you please by your sin and death? It is none of your godly friends. Alas, it is the grief of their souls to see your misery, and they lament you many a time when you give them little thanks for it, and when you have not hearts to lament yourselves.

Who is it, then, that takes pleasure in your sin?

1. The devil indeed takes pleasure in your sin and death; for this is the very end of all his temptations; for this he watches night and day; you cannot devise to please him better than to go on in sin. How glad is he when he sees thee going into the alehouse, or other sin, and when he heareth thee curse, or swear, or rail! How glad is he when he heareth thee revile the minister that would draw thee from thy sin and help to save thee! these are his delight.

2. The wicked are also delighted in it; for it is agreeable to their nature.

3. But I know, for all this, that it is not the pleasing of the devil that you intend, even when you please him; but it is your own flesh, the greatest and most dangerous enemy, that you intend to please. It is the flesh that would be pampered, that would be pleased in meat, and drink, and clothing; that would be pleased with company, and pleased in applause and credit with the world, and pleased in sports, and lusts, and idleness; this is the gulf that devoureth all. This is the very god that you serve, for the Scripture saith of such, that their bellies are their god. Phil. 3:19. But I beseech you, stay a little and consider the business.

Question 1. Should your flesh be pleased before your Maker? Will you displease the Lord, and displease your teacher, and your godly friends, to please your brutish appetites or sensual desires? Is not God worthy to be the ruler of your flesh? If he shall not rule it, he will not save it; you cannot in reason expect that he should

Question 2. Your flesh is pleased with your sin, but is your conscience pleased? Doth not it grudge within you, and tell you sometimes that all is not well, and that your case is not so safe as you make it to be; and should not your souls and consciences be pleased before your corruptible flesh?

Question 3. But is not your flesh preparing for its own displeasure also? It loves the bait, but doth it love the hook? It loves the strong drink and sweet morsels; it loves its ease, and sports, and merriment; it loves to be rich and well-spoken of by men, and to be somebody in the world; but doth it love the curse of God? Doth it love to stand trembling before his bar, and to be judged to everlasting fire? Doth it love to be tormented with the devils for ever? Take all together; for there is no separating sin and hell but only by faith and true conversion; if you will keep one, you must have the other. If death and hell be pleasant to thee, no wonder then if you go on in sin; but if they be not, as I am sure they are not, then what if sin were ever so pleasant, is it worth the loss of life eternal? Is a little drink, or meat, or ease; is the good word of sinners, is the riches of this world to be valued above the joys of heaven? Or are they worth the sufferings of eternal fire? Sirs, these questions should be considered before you go any further, by every man that hath reason to consider, and that believes he hath a soul to save or lose.

Well, the Lord here sweareth that he hath no pleasure in your death, but rather that you would turn and live; if yet you will go on and die rather than turn, remember it was not to please God that you did it: it was to please the world, and to please yourselves. And if men will damn themselves to please themselves, and run into endless torments for delight, and have not the sense,

the heart, the grace, to hearken to God or man that would reclaim them, what remedy is there, but they must take what they get by it, and repent of it in another manner, when it is too late? Before I proceed any further in the application I shall consider the next doctrine, which gives me a fuller ground for it.

DOCTRINE V.

So earnest is God for the conversion of sinners that he doubleth his commands and exhortations, with vehemency—Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?

This doctrine is the application of the former, by way of exhortation, and as such I shall handle it. Is there an unconverted sinner that heareth these vehement words of God? Is there a man or woman in this assembly that is yet a stranger to the renewing, sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost? It is a happy assembly if it be not so with the most. Hearken, then, to the voice of your Maker, and turn to him by Christ without delay. Would you know the will of God? Why, this is his will, that you presently turn. Shall the living God send so earnest a message to his creatures, and should they not obey?

Hearken, then, all you that live after the flesh: the Lord that gave thee thy breath and being hath sent a message to thee from heaven; and this is his message, **Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?** He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Shall the voice of the eternal Majesty be neglected? If he do but terribly thunder, thou art afraid. O but this voice doth more nearly concern thee. If he did but tell thee thou shalt die to-morrow, thou wouldst not make light of it. O but this word concerneth thy life or death everlasting. It is both a command and an exhortation. As if he had said to thee, "I charge thee, upon the allegiance that thou owest to me, thy Creator and Redeemer, that thou renounce the flesh, the world, and the devil, and turn to me, that thou mayest live. I condescend to entreat thee, as thou either lovest or fearest him that made thee; as thou lovest thine own life, even thine everlasting life, turn and live: as ever thou wouldst escape eternal misery, turn, turn, for why wilt thou die?" And is there a heart in man, in a reasonable creature, that can once refuse such a message, such a command, such an exhortation as this? O what a thing, then, is the heart of man!

Hearken, then, all ye that love yourselves, and all that regard your own salvation; here is the most joyful message that was ever sent to the ears of man: **"Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"** You are not yet shut up under desperation. Here is mercy offered you; turn, and you shall have it. O sirs, with what glad and joyful hearts should you receive these tidings! I know this is not the first time that you have heard it; but how have you regarded it, or how do you regard it now? Hear, all you ignorant, careless sinners, the word of the Lord. Hear, all you worldlings, you sensual flesh-pleasers; you gluttons, and drunkards, and whoremongers, and swearers; you railers and backbiters, slanderers and liars—**Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?**

Hear, all you cold and outside professors, and all that are strangers to the life of Christ, and never knew the power of his cross and resurrection, and never felt your hearts warmed with his love, and live not on him as the strength of your souls—"Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"

Hear, all that are void of the love of God, whose hearts are not towards him, nor taken up with the hopes of glory, but who set more by your earthly prosperity and delights than by the joys of heaven; all you that are religious but a little by the by, and give God no more than your flesh can spare; that have not denied your carnal selves, and forsaken all that you have for Christ, in the estimation and grounded resolution of your souls, but have some one

thing in the world so dear to you that you cannot spare it for Christ, if he required it, but will rather venture on his displeasure than forsake it—"Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"

If you never heard it, or observed it before, remember that you were told from the word of God this day, that if you will but turn, you may live; and if you will not turn, you shall surely die.

What now will you do, sirs? What is your resolution? Will you turn, or will you not? Halt not any longer between two opinions. If the Lord be God, follow him; if your flesh be God, then serve it still. If heaven be better than earth and fleshly pleasures, come away, then, and seek a better country, and lay up your treasure where rust and moths do not corrupt, and thieves cannot break through and steal; and be awakened at last, with all your might to seek the kingdom that cannot be moved, Heb. 12:28, and to employ your lives on a higher design, and turn the stream of your cares and labors another way than formerly you have done. But if earth be better than heaven, or will do more for you or last you longer, then keep it and make your best of it, and follow it still. Sirs, are you resolved what to do? If you be not, I will set a few more moving considerations before you, to see if reason will make you resolve.

I. Consider what **preparations** mercy hath made for your salvation; and what pity it is that any man should be damned after all this. The time was, when the flaming sword was in the way, and the curse of God's law would have kept thee back if thou hadst been never so willing to turn to God. The time was when thyself, and all the friends that thou hadst in the world, could never have produced thee the pardon of thy sins past, though thou hadst never so much lamented and reformed them. But Christ hath removed this impediment, by the ransom of his blood. The time was that God was wholly unreconciled, as being not satisfied for the violation of his law; but now he is so far satisfied and reconciled, as that he hath made thee a free act of oblivion, and a free deed of the gift of Christ and life, and offereth it to thee, and entreateth thee to accept it; and it may be thine if thou wilt. For "he was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation." 2 Cor. 5:18, 19. Sinners, we too are commanded to deliver this message to you all, as from the Lord: "Come, for all things are ready." Luke 14:17. Are all things ready, and are you unready? God is ready to entertain you, and pardon all that you have done against him, if you will but come. As long as you have sinned, as wilfully as you have sinned, as heinously as you have sinned, he is ready to cast all behind his back, if you will but come. Though you have been prodigals, and run away from God, and have stayed away so long, he is ready even to meet you, and embrace you in his arms, and rejoice in your conversion, if you will but turn. Even the worldlings and drunkards will find God ready to bid them welcome, if they will but come. Doth not this turn thy heart within thee? O sinner! if thou hadst a heart of flesh, and not of stone in thee, methinks this should melt it. Shall the dreadful infinite Majesty of heaven even wait for thy returning, and be ready to receive thee, who hast abused him, and forgotten him so long? Shall he delight in thy conversion, that might at any time glorify his justice in thy damnation? and yet doth it not melt thy heart within thee, and art thou not yet ready to come in? Hast thou not as much reason to be ready to come as God hath to invite thee and bid thee welcome?

But that is not all: Christ hath died on the cross, and made such a way for thee to the Father, that, on his account, thou mayest be welcome, if thou wilt come. And yet art thou not ready?

A pardon is already expressly granted, and offered thee in the Gospel. And yet art thou not ready?

The ministers of the Gospel are ready to assist thee, to instruct thee, pray for thee. And yet art thou not ready?

All that fear God about thee are ready to rejoice in thy conversion, and to receive thee into the communion of saints, and to give thee the right hand of fellowship, yea, though thou hadst been one that had been cast out of their society: they dare not but forgive where God forgiveth, when it is manifest to them by thy confession and amendment; they dare not so much as reproach thee with thy former sins, because they know that God will not upbraid thee with them. If thou hadst been never so scandalous, if thou wouldst but heartily be converted and come in, they would not refuse thee, let the world say what they would against it. And are all these ready to receive thee, and yet art thou not ready to come in?

Yea, heaven itself is ready: the Lord will receive thee into the glory of his saints. Vile as thou hast been, if thou wilt be but cleansed thou mayest have a place before his throne; his angels will be ready to guard thy soul to the place of joy if thou do but unfeignedly come in. And is God ready, the sacrifice of Christ ready, the promise ready, and pardon ready? Are ministers ready, and the people of God ready, and heaven itself ready? and angels ready? and all these but waiting for thy conversion; and yet art thou not ready? What! not ready to live, when thou has been dead so long? not ready to come to thy right understanding, as the prodigal is said to "come to himself," Luke 15:17, when thou hast been beside thyself so long? Not ready to be saved, when thou art even ready to be condemned? Art thou not ready to lay hold on Christ, that would deliver thee, when thou art even ready to sink into damnation? Art thou not ready to be saved from hell, when thou art even ready to be cast remediless into it? Alas, man! dost thou know what thou doest? If thou die unconverted there is no doubt to be made of thy damnation; and thou art not sure to live an hour. And yet art thou not ready to turn and to come in? O miserable wretch! Hast thou not served the flesh and the devil long enough? Yet hast thou not enough of sin? Is it so good to thee, or so profitable for thee? Dost thou know what it is, that thou wouldst yet have more of it? Hast thou had so many calls, and so many mercies, and so many warnings, and so many examples? Hast thou seen so many laid in the grave, and yet art thou not ready to let go thy sins and come to Christ? What, after so many convictions and pangs of conscience, after so many purposes and promises, art thou not yet ready to turn and live? O that thy eyes, thy heart were opened to know how fair an offer is now made to thee! and what a joyful message it is that we are sent on, to bid thee come, for all things are ready!

II. Consider also, what calls thou hast to turn and live. How many, how loud, how earnest, how dreadful: and yet what encouraging, joyful calls! For the principal inviter is God himself. He that commandeth heaven and earth, commands thee to turn, and that presently, without delay. He commands the sun to run its course, and to rise upon thee every morning; and though it be so glorious an orb, and many times bigger than all the earth, yet it obeyeth him, and faileth not one minute of its appointed time. He commandeth all the planets and the orbs of heaven, and they obey. He commandeth the sea to ebb and flow, and the whole creation to keep its course, and all obey him; the angels of heaven obey his will, when he sends them to minister to such worms as we on earth, Heb. 1:14; and yet if he command but a sinner to turn, he will not obey him. He only thinks himself wiser than God, and he cavils and pleads the cause of sin, and will not obey. If the Lord Almighty say the word, the heavens and all therein obey him; but if he call a drunkard out of an alehouse, he will not obey: or if he call a worldly fleshly

sinner to deny himself, and mortify the flesh, and set his heart upon a better inheritance, he will not obey.

If thou hadst any love in thee, thou wouldst know the voice, and say, O this is my Father's call! how can I find in my heart to disobey? For the sheep of Christ "know and hear his voice, and they follow him, and he giveth them eternal life." John 10:4. If thou hadst any spiritual life and sense in thee, at least thou wouldst say, "This call is the dreadful voice of God, and who dare disobey? For saith the prophet, 'The lion hath roared, who will not fear?" Amos 3:8. God is not a man that thou shouldst dally and trifle with him. Remember what he said to Paul at his conversion, **"It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."** Acts 9:5. Wilt thou yet go on and despise his word, and resist his Spirit, and stop thine ears against his call? who is it that will have the worst of this? Dost thou know whom thou disobeyest, and contendest with, and what thou art doing? It were a far wiser and easier task for thee to contend with the thorns, and spurn them with thy bare feet, and beat them with thy bare hands, or put thy head into the burning fire. "Be not deceived; God will not be mocked." Gal, 6:7. Whoever else be mocked, God will not be: you had better play with the fire in your thatch, than with the fire of his burning wrath. "For our God is a consuming fire." Heb. 12:29. O how unmeet a match art thou for God! "It is a fearful thing to fall into his hands." Heb. 10:31. And therefore it is a fearful thing to contend with him or resist him. As you love your own souls, take heed what you do: what will you say if he begin in wrath to plead with you? what will you do if he take you once in hand? Will you then strive against his judgment, as now ye do against his grace? **"Fury is not in me,"** saith the Lord, that is, I delight not to destroy you: I do it, as it were, unwillingly; but yet, **"who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me."** Isa. 27:4, 5. It is an unequal combat for the briars and stubble to make war with the fire.

Thus you see who it is that calleth you, that would move you to hear his call, and turn. So consider also by what instruments, and how often, and how earnestly he calls.

1. Every leaf of the blessed book of God hath, as it were, a voice, and calls out to thee, Turn, and live; turn, or thou wilt die. How canst thou open it, and read a leaf, or hear a chapter, and not perceive God bids thee turn?

2. It is the voice of every sermon that thou hearest: for what else is the scope and drift of all, but to call, and persuade, and entreat thee to turn?

3. It is the voice of many a motion of the Spirit that secretly speaks over these words again, and urgeth thee to turn.

4. It is likely, sometimes it is the voice of thy own conscience. Art thou not sometimes convinced that all is not well with thee? And doth not thy conscience tell thee that thou must be a new man, and take a new course, and often call upon thee to return?

5. It is the voice of the gracious examples of the godly. When thou seest them live a heavenly life, and fly from the sin which is thy delight, this really calls on thee to turn.

6. It is the voice of all the works of God: for they also are God's books that teach thee this lesson, by showing thee his greatness, and wisdom, and goodness; and calling thee to observe them, and admire the Creator. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work: day unto day uttereth speech, night unto night showeth knowledge." Psa. 19:1, 2. Every time the sun riseth unto thee, it really calleth thee to turn, as if it should say, "What do I travel and compass the world for, but to declare

to men the glory of their Maker, and to light them to do his work? And do I still find thee doing the work of sin, and sleeping out thy life in negligence? Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Eph. 5:14. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; it is now high time to awake out of sleep. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." Rom. 13:11-14. This text was the means of Augustin's conversion.

7. It is the voice of every mercy thou dost possess. If thou couldst but hear and understand them, they all cry out unto thee, Turn. Why doth the earth bear thee, but to seek and serve the Lord? Why doth it afford thee its fruits, but to serve him? Why doth the air afford thee breath, but to serve him? Why do all the creatures serve thee with their labors and their lives, but that thou mightest devote them and thyself to the service of God? Why doth he give thee time, and health, and strength, but to serve him? Why hast thou meat, and drink, and clothes, but for his service? Hast thou any thing which thou hast not received? and if thou didst hast thou meat, and drink, and clothes, but for his service? and if thou didst receive them, it is reason thou shouldst bethink thee from whom, and to what end and use thou didst receive them. Didst thou never cry to him for help in thy distress, and didst thou not then understand that it was thy part to turn and serve him, if he would deliver thee? . He hath done his part, and spared thee yet longer, and tried thee another, and another year; and yet dost thou not turn? You know the parable of the unfruitful fig-tree. Luke 13:6-9. When the Lord had said, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" he was entreated to try it one year longer, and then if it proved not fruitful, to cut it down. Christ himself there makes the application twice over, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." How many years hath God looked for the fruits of love and holiness from thee, and hath found none, and yet he hath spared thee! How many a time, by thy wilful ignorance, and carelessness, and disobedience, hast thou provoked justice to say, "Cut him down, why cumbereth he the ground?" And yet mercy hath prevailed, and patience hath forborne the fatal blow to this day. If thou hadst the understanding of a man within thee, thou wouldst know that all this calleth thee to turn. "Dost thou think thou shalt still escape the judgment of God? or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds." Rom. 2:3-6.

8. Moreover, it is the voice of every affliction to call thee to make haste and turn. Sickness and pain cry, Turn; and poverty, and loss of friends, and every twig of the chastening rod cry, Turn. And yet wilt thou not hearken to the call? These have come near thee, and made thee feel; they have made thee groan, and can they not make thee turn?

9. The very frame of thy nature and being itself bespeaketh thy return. Why hast thou reason, but to rule thy flesh, and serve thy Lord? Why hast thou an understanding soul, but to learn and know his will and do it? Why hast thou a heart within thee that can love, and fear, and desire, but that thou shouldst fear him, and love him, and desire after him?

Lay all these together now, and see what should be the issue. The holy Scriptures call upon thee to turn; the ministers of Christ call upon thee to

turn; the Spirit cries, Turn; thy conscience cries, Turn; the godly, by persuasion and example, cry, Turn; the whole world, and all the creatures therein that are presented to thy consideration, cry, Turn; the patient forbearance of God cries, Turn; all the mercies which thou receivest cry, Turn; the rod of God's chastisement cries, Turn; thy reason and the frame of thy nature bespeaks thy turning; and so do all thy promises to God: and yet art thou not resolved to turn?

III. Moreover, poor, hard-hearted sinner, didst thou ever consider **upon what terms thou** standest all this while with Him that calleth on thee to turn? Thou art his own, and owest him thyself and all thou hast; and may he not command his own? Thou art his absolute servant, and should serve no other master. Thou standest at his mercy, and thy life is in his hand, and he is resolved to save thee upon no other terms; thou hast many malicious spiritual enemies that would be glad if God would but forsake thee, and let them alone with thee, and leave thee to their will: how quickly would they deal with thee in another manner! and thou canst not be delivered from them but by turning unto God. Thou art fallen under his wrath by thy sin already; and thou knowest not how long his patience will yet wait. Perhaps this is the last year, perhaps the last day. His sword is even at thy heart while the word is in thine ear; and if thou turn not, thou art a dead and undone man. Were thy eyes but open to see where thou standest, even upon the brink of hell, and to see how many thousands are there already that did not turn, thou wouldst see that it is time to look about thee.

Well, sirs, look inwards now and tell me how your hearts are affected with these offers of the Lord. You hear what is his mind: he delighteth not in your death; he calls to you, Turn, turn: it is a fearful sign if all this move thee not, or if it do but half move thee; and much more if it make thee more careless in thy misery, because thou hearest of the mercifulness of God. The working of the medicine will partly tell us whether there be any hope of the cure. O what glad tidings would it be to those that are now in hell, if they had but such a message from God! What a joyful word would it be to hear this, turn and live! yea, what a welcome word would it be to thyself, when thou hadst felt that wrath of God but an hour! Or if, after a thousand or ten thousand years' torment, thou couldst but hear such a word from God, "Turn and live;" and yet wilt thou neglect it, and suffer us to return without our errand?

Behold, sinners, we are sent here as the messengers of the Lord to set before you life and death. What say you? which of them will you choose? Christ standeth, as it were, by thee, with heaven in the one hand and hell in the other, and offereth thee thy choice. Which wilt thou choose? The voice of the Lord maketh the rocks to tremble. Psa. 29. And is it nothing to hear him threaten thee, if thou wilt not turn? Dost thou not understand and feel this voice, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" It is the voice of love, of infinite love, of thy best and kindest friend, as thou mightest easily perceive by the motion; and yet canst thou neglect it? It is the voice of pity and compassion. The Lord seeth whither thou art going better than thou dost, which makes him call after thee, Turn, turn. He seeth what will become of thee, if thou turn not. He thinketh with himself, "Ah! this poor sinner will cast himself into endless torments if he do not turn. I must in justice deal with him according to my righteous law." And therefore he calleth after thee, Turn, turn. O sinner! if thou didst but know the thousandth part as well as God doth the danger that is near you, and the misery that you are running into, we should have no more need to call after you to turn.

Moreover, this voice that calleth to thee is the same that hath prevailed

with thousands already, and called all to heaven that are now there; and they would not now for a thousand worlds that they had made light of it, and not turned to God. Now what are they possessing that turned at God's call? Now they perceive that it was indeed the voice of love, that meant them no more harm than their salvation; and if thou wilt obey the same call thou shalt come to the same happiness. There are millions that must for ever lament that they turn not; but there is never a soul in heaven that is sorry that they were converted.

Well, sirs, are you yet resolved, or are you not? Do I need to say any more to you? What will you do? Will you turn, or not? Speak, man, in thy heart to God, though you speak not out to me; speak, lest he take thy silence for denial; speak quickly, lest he never make thee the like offer more; speak resolvedly, and not waveringly, for he will have no indifferent ones to be his followers. Say in thine heart now, without any more delay, even before thou stir hence, "By the grace of God I am resolved presently to turn. And because I know my own insufficiency, I am resolved to wait on God for his grace, and to follow him in his ways, and forsake my former courses and companions, and give up myself to the guidance of the Lord."

Sirs, you are not shut up in the darkness of heathenism, nor in the desperation of the damned. Life is before you, and you may have it on reasonable terms, if you will; yea, on free cost, if you will accept it. The way of God lieth plain before you; the church is open to you. You may have Christ, and pardon, and holiness, if you will. What say you? Will you, or will you not? If you say Nay, or say nothing, and still go on, God is witness, and those who hear me are witnesses, and your own consciences are witnesses, how fair an offer you had this day. Remember, you might have had Christ, and would not. Remember, when you have lost it, that you might have had eternal life as well as others, and would not; and all this because you would not turn!

But let us come to the next doctrine, and hear your reasons.

DOCTRINE VI.

The Lord condescendeth to reason the case with unconverted sinners, and to ask them why they will die.

A strange disputation it is, both as to the controversy and as to the disputants.

I. The controversy, or question propounded is, Why wicked men will destroy themselves? or, Why they will rather die than turn; whether they have any sufficient reason for so doing?

II. The disputants are God and man: the most holy God, and wicked unconverted sinners.

Is it not a strange thing, which God doth here seem to suppose, that any man should be willing to die and be damned? yea, that this should be the case of all the wicked? that is, of the greatest part of the world. But you will say, "This cannot be; for nature desireth the preservation and felicity if itself; and the wicked are more selfish than others, and not less; and therefore how can any man be willing to be damned?"

To which I answer: 1. It is a certain truth that no man can be willing to bear any evil, as evil, but only as it hath some appearance of good; much less can any man be willing to be eternally tormented. Misery, as such, is desired by none. 2. But yet, for all that, it is most true which God here

teacheth us that the cause why the wicked die is, because they will die. And this is true in several respects.

1. Because they will go the way that leads to hell, although they are told by God and man whither it goes and where it ends; and though God hath so often professed in his word, that if they hold on in that way they shall be condemned; and that they shall not be saved unless they turn. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." "The way of peace they know not; there is no judgment in their goings; they have made them crooked paths. Whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace." Isa. 48:22; 57:21; 59:8. They have the word and the oath of the living God for it, that if they will not turn they shall not enter into his rest: and yet, wicked they are, and wicked they will be, let God and man say what they will: fleshly they are, and fleshly they will be; worldlings they are, and worldings they will be; though God hath told them that the love of the world is enmity to God, and that if any man love the world (in that measure) the love of the Father is not in him. James 4:4; 1 John, 2:15. So that, consequently, these men are willing to be damned, though not directly; they are willing to walk in the way to hell, and love the certain cause of their torment; though they do not will hell itself, and do not love the pain which they must endure.

Is not this the truth of your case, sirs? You would not burn in hell, but you will kindle the fire by your sins, and cast yourselves into it; you would not be tormented with devils for ever, but you will do that which will certainly procure it in spite of all that can be said against it. It is just as if you would say, "I will drink this poison, but yet I will not die. I will cast myself headlong from the top of a steeple, but yet I will not kill myself. I will thrust this knife into my heart, but yet I will not take away my life. I will put this fire into the thatch of my house, but yet I will not burn it." Just so it is with wicked men; they will be wicked, and they will live after the flesh and the world, and yet they would not be damned. But do you not know that the means lead to the end? and that God hath, by his righteous law, concluded that you must repent or perish? He that will take poison may as well say plainly, I will kill myself, for it will prove no better in the end; though perhaps he loved it for the sweetness of the sugar that was mixed with it, and would not be persuaded that it was poison, but that he might take it and do well enough; but it is not his conceits and confidence that will save his life. So, if you will be drunkards, or fornicators, or worldlings, or live after the flesh, you may as well say plainly, We will be damned; for so you will be unless you turn. Would you not rebuke the folly of a murderer that would say, I will kill, but I will not be hanged, when he knows that if he does the one, the judge in justice will see that the other be done? If he say, I will murder, he may as well say plainly, I will be hanged; and if you will go on in carnal life, you may as well say plainly, We will go to hell.

2. Moreover, the wicked will not use those means without which there is no hope of their salvation. He that will not eat, may as well say plainly, he will not live, unless he can tell how to live without meat. He that will not go his journey, may as well say plainly, he will not come to the end. He that falls into the water, and will not come out, nor suffer another to help him out, may as well say plainly, he will be drowned. So, if you be carnal and ungodly, and will not be converted, nor use the means by which you should be converted, but think it more ado than needs, you may as well say plainly you will be damned; for if you have found out a way to be saved without conversion, you have done that which was never done before.

3. Yea, this is not all; but the wicked are unwilling even to partake of salvation itself; though they may desire somewhat which they call by the

name of heaven, yet heaven itself, considered in the true nature of the felicity, they desire not; yea, their hearts are quite against it. Heaven is a state of perfect holiness, and of continual love and praise to God, and the wicked have no heart to this. The imperfect love, and praise, and holiness which is here to be attained, they have no mind for; much less for that which is so much greater. The joys of heaven are of so pure and spiritual a nature that the heart of the wicked cannot truly desire them.

So that by this time you may see on what ground it is that God supposeth that the wicked will their own destruction. They will not turn, though they must turn or die: they will rather venture on certain misery than be converted; and then, to quiet themselves in their sins, they will make themselves believe that they shall nevertheless escape.

II. And as this controversy is matter of wonder, in that men should be such enemies to themselves as wilfully to cast away their souls, so are the disputants too: that God should stoop so low as thus to plead the case with men; and that men should be so strangely blind and obstinate as to need all this in so plain a case; yea, and to resist all this, when their own salvation lieth upon the issue.

No wonder if they will not hear us that are men, when they will not hear the Lord himself. As God saith, when he sent the prophet to the Israelites, "The house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me; for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted." Ezek. 3:7. No wonder if they can plead against a minister, or a godly neighbor, when they will plead against the Lord himself, even against the plainest passages of his word, and think that they have reason on their side. When they weary the Lord with their words, they say, "Wherein have we wearied him?" Mal. 2:17. The priests that despised his name durst ask, "Wherein have we despised thy name?" And "when they polluted his altar, and made the table of the Lord contemptible," they durst say, "Wherein have we polluted thee?" Mal. 1:6, 7. But "Woe unto him," saith the Lord, "that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth: shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou?" Isa. 45:9.

Question. But why is it that God will reason the case with man?

Answer. 1. Because man being a reasonable creature, is to be dealt with accordingly, and by reason to be persuaded and overcome; God hath therefore endowed them with reason, that they might use it for him. One would think a reasonable creature should not go against the clearest, the greatest reason in the world, when it is set before him.

2. At least, men shall see that God did require nothing of them that was unreasonable; but both in what he commandeth them, and what he forbids them, he hath all the right reason in the world on his side; and they have good reason to obey him—but none to disobey him. And thus even the damned shall be forced to justify God, and confess that it was only reasonable that they should have turned to him; and they shall be forced to condemn themselves, and confess that they had little reason to cast away themselves by the neglecting of his grace in the day of their visitation.

Look up your best and strongest reasons, sinners, if you will make good your way. You see now with whom you have to deal. What sayest thou, unconverted, sensual sinner? Darest thou venture upon a dispute with God? Art thou able to confute him? Art thou ready to enter the lists? God asketh thee, Why wilt thou die? Art thou furnished with a sufficient answer? Wilt thou undertake to prove that God is mistaken, and that thou art in the right? O what an undertaking is that! Why, either he or you are mistaken, when he is for your conversion, and you are against it; he calls upon you to turn, and

you will not; he bids you do it presently, even to-day, while it is called to-day, and you delay, and think it time enough hereafter. He saith it must be a total change, and you must be holy and new creatures, and born again; and you think that less may serve the turn, and that it is enough to patch up the old man, without becoming new. Who is in the right now? God or you? God calleth you to turn, and to live a holy life, and you will not. By your disobedient lives it appears you will not. If you will, why do you not? Why have you not done it all this while? And why do you not fall upon it yet? Your wills have the command of your lives. We may certainly conclude that you are unwilling to turn, when you do not turn. And why will you not? Can you give any reason for it that is worthy to be called a reason?

I that am but a worm, your fellow-creature, of a shallow capacity, dare challenge the wisest of you all to reason the case with me while I plead my Maker's cause; and I need not be discouraged when I know I plead but the cause that God pleadeth, and contend for him that will have the best at last. Had I but these two general grounds against you, I am sure that you have no good reason on your side.

1. I am sure it can be no good reason which is against the God of truth and reason. It cannot be light that is contrary to the sun. There is no knowledge in any creature but what it had from God; and therefore none can be wiser than God. It were fatal presumption for the highest angel to compare with his Creator! What is it, then, for a lump of earth, an ignorant sot, that knoweth not himself nor his own soul, that knoweth but little of the things which he seeth, yea, that is more ignorant than many of his neighbors, to set himself against the wisdom of the Lord! It is one of the fullest discoveries of the horrible wickedness of carnal men, and the madness of such as sin, that so silly a mole dare contradict his Maker, and call in question the word of God: yea, that those people that are so ignorant that they cannot give us a reasonable answer concerning the very first principles of religion, are yet so wise in their own conceit that they dare question the plainest truths of God, yea, contradict them and cavil against them, when they can scarcely speak sense, and will believe them no further than agreeth with their foolish wisdom!

2. And as I know that God must needs be in the right, so I know the case is so palpable and gross which he pleadeth against, that no man can have reason for it. Is it possible that a man can have any reason to break his Maker's laws, and reason to dishonor the Lord of glory, and reason to abuse the Lord that bought him? Is it possible that a man can have any good reason to damn his own immortal soul? Mark the Lord's question, Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die? Is eternal death a thing to be desired? Are you in love with hell? What reason have you wilfully to perish? If you think you have some reason to sin, should you not remember that death is the wages of sin, Rom. 6:23, and think whether you have any reason to undo yourselves, body and soul, forever? You should not only ask whether you love the adder, but whether you love the sting? It is such a thing for a man to cast away his everlasting happiness, and to sin against God, that no good reason can be given for it; but the more any one pleads for it, the more mad he showeth himself to be. Had you a kingdom offered you for every sin that you commit, it were not reason but madness to accept it. Could you by every sin obtain the highest thing on earth that flesh desireth, it were of no considerable value to persuade you in reason to commit it. If it were to please your greatest or dearest friends, or to obey the greatest prince on earth, or to save your lives, or to escape the geratest earthly misery; all these are of no consideration to draw a man in reason to the committing of one sin. If it were a right hand or a right eye that would hinder your salvation, it is the most gainful way to cast it away, rather than to

go to hell to save it; for there is no saving a part when you lose the whole. So exceedingly great are the matters of eternity, that nothing in this world deserveth once to be named in comparison with them; nor can any earthly thing, though it were life, or crowns, or kingdoms, be a reasonable excuse for the neglect of matters of such high and everlasting consequence. A man can have no reason to cross his ultimate end. Heaven is such a thing, that if you lose it, nothing can supply the want, or make up the loss; and hell is such a thing, that if you suffer it, nothing can remove your misery, or give you ease and comfort; and therefore nothing can be a valuable consideration to excuse you for neglecting your own salvation; for, saith our Saviour, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Mark 8:36.

O sirs, did you but know what matters they are that we are now speaking to you of, you would have other thoughts of these things. If the devil could come to the saints in heaven that live in the sight and love of God, and should offer them sensual pleasures, or merry company, or sports to entice them away from God and glory, I pray you tell me, how do you think they would entertain the motion? Nay, or if he should offer them to be kings on the earth, do you think this would entice them down from heaven? O with what hatred and holy scorn would they reject the motion! and why should not you do so, that have heaven open to your faith, if you had but faith to see it? There is not a soul in hell but knows, by this time, that it was a mad exchange to let go heaven for fleshly pleasure; and that it is not a little mirth, or pleasure, or worldly riches, or honor, or the good-will or word of men, that will quench hell fire, or make him a gainer that loseth his soul. O if you had heard what I believe, if you had seen what I believe, and that on the credit of the word of God, you would say there can be no reason to warrant a man to destroy his soul; you durst not sleep quietly another night, before you had resolved to turn and live.

If you see a man put his hand in the fire till it burn off, you will marvel at it; but this is a thing that a man may have reason for, as Bishop Cranmer had when he burnt off his hand for subscribing to popery. If you see a man cut off a leg or an arm, it is a sad sight; but this is a thing that a man may have a good reason for, as many a man hath it done to save his life. If you see a man give his body to be tormented with scourges and racks, or to be burned to ashes, and refuse deliverance when it is offered, this is a hard case to flesh and blood; but this a man may have good reason for, as you may see in Heb. 11:33-36, and as many a hundred martyrs have done. But for a man to forsake the Lord that made him, and to run into the fire of hell when he is told of it, and entreated to turn that he may be saved—this is a thing that can have no reason in the world to justify or excuse it. For heaven will pay for the loss of any thing that we can lose to obtain it, or for any labor which we bestow for it; but nothing can pay for the loss of heaven.

I beseech you now let this word come nearer to your heart. As you are convinced that you have no reason to destroy yourselves, so tell me what reason have you to refuse to turn and live to God? What reason has the veriest worldling, or drunkard, or ignorant, careless sinner of you all, why he should not be as holy as any you know, and be as careful for his soul as any other? Will not hell be as intolerable to you as to others? Should not your own souls be as dear to you as theirs to them? Hath not God as much authority over you? Why, then, will you not become a sanctified people, as well as they?

O sirs, when God bringeth the matter down to the very principles of nature, and shows that you have no more reason to be ungodly than you have to damn your own souls—if yet you will not understand and turn, it seems a desperate case that you are in.

And now, either you have good reason for what you do, or you have not: if not, will you go against reason itself? Will you do that which you have no reason for? But if you think you have a reason, produce it, and make the best of your matter. Reason the case a little with me, your fellow-creature, which is far easier than to reason the case with God; tell me, man, here before the Lord, as if thou wert to die this hour, why shouldst thou not resolve to turn this day, before thou stir from the place thou standest in; what reason hast thou to deny or to delay? Hast thou any reasons that satisfy thine own conscience for it, or any that thou darest own and plead at the bar of God? If thou hast, let us hear them, bring them forth and make them good. But, alas, what poor stuff, what nonsense, instead of reasons, do we daily hear from ungodly men! But for the worth of their immortal souls, I should be ashamed to name them.

Objection. 1. One saith, if none shall be saved but such converted and sanctified ones as you talk of, heaven will be but empty: then God help a great many!

Answer. Why, it seems you think tha God doth not know, or else that he is not to be believed. Measure not all by yourselves: God hath thousands and millions of his sanctified ones; but yet they are few in comparison of the world, as Christ himself hath told us. Matt. 7:13, 14. It better beseems you to make that use of this truth which Christ teacheth you: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it; but wide is the gate and broad is the way which leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat." Luke 13:22-24. "Fear not, little flock," saith Christ to his sanctified ones, "for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke 12:32.

Objection 2. I am sure, if such as I go to hell, we shall have store of company.

Answer. And will that be any ease or comfort to you? Or do you think you may not have company enough in heaven? Will you be undone for company. or will you not believe that God will execute his threatenings because there be so many that are guilty? These are all unreasonable conceits.

Objection 3. But all men are sinners, even the best of you all.

Answer. But all are not unconverted sinners. The godly live not in gross sins; and their very infirmities are their grief and burden, which they daily long, and pray, and strive to be rid of. Sin hath no dominion over them.

Objection 4. I do not see that professors are any better than other men; they will overreach, and oppress, and are as covetous as any.

Answer. Whatever hyprocrites are, it is not so with those that are sanctified. God hath thousands and tens of thousands that are otherwise, though the malicious world accuse them of what they can never prove, and of that which never entered into their hearts; and commonly they charge them with heart sins, which none can see but God, because they can charge them with no such wickedness in their lives as they are guilty of themselves.

Objection. 5. But I am no whoremonger, nor drunkard, nor oppressor; and therefore why should you call upon me to be converted?

Answer. As if you were not born after the flesh, and had not lived after the flesh as well as others! Is it not as great a sin as any of these, for a man to have an earthly mind, and to love the world above God, and to have an unbelieving, unhumbled heart? Nay, let me tell you more, that many persons that avoid disgraceful sins are as fast glued to the world, and as much slaves to the flesh, and as strange to God and averse to heaven, in their more civil course, as others are in their more shameful, notorious sins.

Objection 6. But I mean nobody any harm, nor do any harm; and why, then, should God condemn me?

Answer. Is it no harm to neglect the Lord that made thee, and the work for which thou camest into the world, and to prefer the creature before the Creator, and to neglect grace that is daily offered thee? It is the depth of thy sinfulness to be so insensible of it: the dead feel not that they are dead. If once thou wert made alive, thou wouldst see more amiss in thyself, and marvel at thyself for making so light of it.

Objection 7. I think you would make men mad, under pretence of converting them: it is enough to rack the brains of simple people to muse so much on matters too high for them.

Answer 1. Can you be more mad than you are already? or, at least, can there be a more dangerous madness than to neglect your everlasting welfare and wilfully undo yourselves?

2. A man is never truly in his right mind till he be converted: he never knows God, nor knows sin, nor knows Christ, nor knows the world, nor himself, nor what his business is on earth, so as to set himself about it, till he be converted. The Scripture saith that the wicked are unreasonable men, and that the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God. 2 Thess. 3:2; 1 Cor. 1:20; and Luke 15:17. It is said of the prodigal, that when he came to himself he resolved to return. What a strange wisdom is this; men will disobey God, and run to hell, for fear of being accounted fools!

3. What is there in the work that Christ calls you to, that should drive a man out of his senses? Is it loving God, and calling upon him, and comfortably thinking of the glory to come, and the forsaking of our sins, and loving one another, and delighting ourselves in the service of God? Are these such things as should make men mad?

4. And whereas you say that these matters are too high for us; you accuse God himself for making this our work, and giving us his word, and commanding all that will be blessed to meditate on it day and night. Are the matters which we are made for, and which we live for, too high for us to meddle with? This is plainly to unman us, and to make beasts of us, as if we were like them that must meddle with no higher matters than what belongs to flesh and earth. If heaven be too high for you to think on and provide for, it will be too high for you ever to possess.

5. If God should sometimes suffer any weakheaded person to be distracted by thinking of eternal things, this is because they misunderstand them, and run without a guide; and of the two, I had rather be in the case of such a one, than of the mad, unconverted world, that take their destraction to be their wisdom.

Objection 8. I do not think that God cares so much what men think, or speak, or do, as to make so great a matter of it.

Answer. It seems, then, you take the word of God to be false: then what will you believe? But your own reason might teach you better, if you believe not the Scriptures; for you see God sets not so light by us but that he vouchsafed to make us, and still preserveth us, and daily upholdeth us, and provideth for us; and will any wise man make a curious frame for nothing? Will you make or buy a clock or watch, and daily look at it, and not care whether it go true or false? Surely, if you believe not a particular eye of Providence observing your hearts and lives, you cannot believe or expect any particular Providence to observe your wants and troubles, or to relieve you; and if God had so little care for you as you imagine, you would never have lived till now; a hundred diseases would have striven which should first destroy you; yea, the devils would have haunted you, and fetched you away alive, as the great fishes devour

the less, and as ravenous beasts and birds devour others. You cannot think that God made man for no end or use, and if he made him for any, it was surely for himself; and can you think he cares not whether his end be accomplished, and whether we do the work that we are made for?

Yea, by this atheistical objection you suppose God to have made and upheld all the world in vain; for what are all other lower creatures for, but for man? What doth the earth but bear us and nourish us, and the beasts but serve us with their labors and lives, and so of the rest? And hath God made so glorious a habitation, and set man to dwell in it, and made all his servants; and now doth he look for nothing at his hands, nor care how he thinks, or speaks, or lives? This is most unreasonable.

Objection 9. It was a better world when men did not make so much ado in religion.

Answer 1. It hath ever been the custom to praise the times past; that world that you speak of was wont to say it was a better world in their forefathers' days; and so did they of their forefathers. This is but an old custom, because we all feel the evil of our own times, but we see not that which was before us.

2. Perhaps you speak as you think. Worldlings think the world is at the best when it is agreeable to their minds, and when they have most mirth and worldly pleasure; and I doubt not but the devil, as well as you, would say that then it was a better world; for then he had more service and less disturbance. But the world is at the best when God is most loved, regarded, and obeyed; and how else will you know when the world is good or bad, but by this?

Objection 10. There are so many ways and religions, that we know not which to be of, and therefore we will be even as we are.

Answer. Because there are many, will you be of that way that you may be sure is wrong? None are further out of the way than worldly, fleshly, unconverted sinners; for they do not only err in this or that opinion, as many sects do, but in the very scope and drift of their lives. If you were going a journey that your life lay on, would you stop or turn again because you met with some crossways, or because you saw some travellers go the horse-way, and some the foot-way, and some perhaps break over the hedge, yea, and some miss the way? Or would you not rather be the more careful to inquire the way? If you have some servants that know not how to do your work right, and some that are unfaithful, would you take it well of any of the rest that would therefore be idle and do you no service, because they see their companions so bad?

Objection 11. I do not see that it goes any better with those that are so godly, than with other men; they are as poor and in as much trouble as others.

Answer. And perhaps in much more, when God sees it meet. They take not earthly prosperity for their wages; they have laid up their treasure and hopes in another world, or else they are not Christians indeed; the less they have, the more is behind, and they are content to wait till then.

Objection 12. When you have said all that you can, I am resolved to hope well, and trust in God, and do as well as I can, and not make so much ado.

Answer 1. Is that doing as well as you can, when you will not turn to God, but your heart is against his holy and diligent service? It is as well as you will, indeed, but that is your misery.

2. My desire is, that you should hope and trust in God. But for what is it that you will hope? Is it to be saved, if you turn and be sanctified? For this you have God's promise, and therfore I say, hope for it, and spare not. But if you hope to be saved without conversion and a holy life, this is not to

hope in God, but in Satan, or yourselves; for God hath given you no such promise, but told you the contrary; but it is Satan and self-love that made you such promises, and raised you to such hopes.

Well, if these objections and such as these, be all you have to say against conversion and a holy life, your all is nothing, and worse than nothing; and if these, and such as these, seem reasons sufficient to persuade you to forsake God and cast yourselves into hell, the Lord deliver you from such reasons, and from such blind understandings, and from such senseless, hardened hearts. Dare you stand to aver one of these reasons at the bar of God? Do you think it will then serve your turn to say, "Lord, I did not turn, because I had so much to do in the world, or because I did not like the lives of some professors, or because I saw men of so many minds!" O how easily will the light of that day confound and shame such reasonings as these! Had you the world to look after? Let the world which you served now pay you your wages, and save you if it can. Had you not a better world to look after first, and were you not commanded to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness, and promised that other things should be added to you? Matt. 6:33. And were you not told that godliness is profitable to all things, having the promise of this life and that which is to come? 1 Tim. 4:8. Did the sins of professors hinder you? You should rather have been the more heedful, and learned by their falls to beware, and have been the more careful, and not the more careless. It was the Scripture, and not their lives, that was your rule. Did the many opinions of the world hinder you? Why, the Scripture that was your rule did teach you but one way, and that was the right way. If you had followed that, even in so much as was plain and easy, you would never have miscarried. Will not such answers as these confound and silence you? If these will not, God hath those that will. When he asked the man, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?" Matt.22:12, that is, what doest thou in my church among professed Christians, without a holy heart and life—what answer did he make? Why, the text saith, "he was speechless;" he had nothing to say. The clearness of the case and the majesty of God will then easily stop the mouths of the most confident of you, though you will not be put down by any thing we can say to you now, but will make good your cause, be it ever so bad. I know already that never a reason that now you can give me will do you any good at last, when your case must be opened before the Lord, and all the world.

Nay, I scarce think that your own consciences are well satisfied with your reasons; for if they are, it seems, then, you have not so much as a purpose to repent. But if you do purpose to repent, it seems you do not put much confidence in the reasons which you bring against it.

What say you, unconverted sinners? Have you any good reasons to give why you should not turn, and presently turn with all your hearts? Or will you go to hell in despite of reason itself? Bethink you what you do in time, for it will shortly be too late to bethink you. Can you find any fault with God, or his work, or wages? Is he a bad master? Is the devil, whom you serve, a better? or is the flesh a better? Is there any harm in a holy life? Is a life of worldliness and ungodliness better? Do you think in your consciences that it would do you any harm to be converted and live a holy life? What harm can it do you? Is it harm to you to have the Spirit of Christ within you, and to have a cleansed, purified heart? If it be bad to be holy, why doth God say, "Be ye holy, for I am holy?" 1 Pet. 1:15, 16; Lev. 20:7. Is it evil to be like God? Is it not said that God made man in his own image? Why, this holiness is his image; this Adam lost, and this Christ by his word and Spirit would restore to you, as he doth to all that he will save. How is it that men

are baptized into the Holy Ghost as their Sanctifier, and yet you will not be sanctified by him, but think it a hurt to you to be sanctified? Tell me truly, as before the Lord, though you are loath to live a holy life, had you not rather die in the case of those that do so, than of others? If you were to die this day, had you not rather die in the case of a converted man than of an unconverted? of a holy and heavenly man than of a carnal, earthly man? and would you not say as Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his?" Numb. 23:10. And why will you not now be of the mind that you will be of then? First or last you must come to this, either to be converted, or to wish you had been, when it is too late.

But what is it that you are afraid of losing, if you turn? Is it your friends? You will but change them; God will be your Friend, and Christ and the Spirit will be your Friend; and every Christian will be your friend. You will get one Friend that will stand you in more stead than all the friends in the world could have done. The friends you lose would have but enticed you to hell, but could not have delivered you; but the Friend you get will save you from hell, and bring you to his own eternal rest.

Is it your pleasures that you are afraid of losing? You think you shall never have a merry day again if once you be converted. Alas! that you should think it a greater pleasure to live in foolish sports and merriments, and please your flesh, than to live in the believing thoughts of glory, and in the love of God, and in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, in which the state of grace consisteth. Rom. 14:17. If it would be a greater pleasure for you to think of your lands and inheritance, if you were lord of all the country, than it is for a child to play at pins, why should it not be a greater joy to you to think of the kingdom of heaven being yours, than all the riches or pleasures of the world? As it is but foolish childishness that makes children so delight in toys that they would not leave them for all your lands, so it is but foolish worldliness, and fleshliness, and wickedness, that makes you so much delight in your houses and lands, and meat and drink, and ease and honor, as that you would not part with them for the heavenly delights. But what will you do for pleasure when these are gone? Do you not think of that? When your pleasures end in horror, and go out like a taper, the pleasures of the saints are then the highest. I have had myself but a little taste of the heavenly pleasures in the forethoughts of the blessed approaching day, and in the present persuasions of the love of God in Christ; but I have taken too deep a draught of earthly pleasures: so that you may see, if I be partial, it is on your side; and yet I must profess, from that little experience, that there is no comparison. There is more joy to be had in a day, if the sun of life shine clear upon us, in the state of holiness, than in a whole life of sinful pleasures. "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Psalm 84:10. "A day in his courts is better than a thousand" any where else. The mirth of the wicked is like the laughter of a madman, that knows not his own misery; and therefore Solomon says of such laughter, "it is mad; and of mirth, what doeth it?" "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It is better to bear the rebuke of the wise, than to hear the song of fools; for as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool." Eccles. 2:2; 7:2-6. Your loudest laughter is but like that of a man that is tickled; he laughs when he has no cause of joy. Judge, as you are men, whether this be a wise man's part. It is but your carnal, unsanctified nature that makes a holy life seem grievous

to you, and a course of sensuality seem more delightful. If you will but turn, the Holy Ghost will give you another nature and inclination, and then it will be more pleasant to you to be rid of your sin, than now it is to keep it; and you will then say, that you knew not what a comfortable life was till now, and that it was never well with you till God and holiness were your delight.

Question. But how cometh it to pass that men should be so unreasonable in the matters of salvation? They have sense enough in other matters: what makes them so loath to be converted that there should need so many words in so plain a case, and all will not do, but the most will live and die unconverted?

Answer. To name them only in a few words, the causes are these:

1. Men are naturally in love with the earth and flesh; they are born sinners, and their nature hath an enmity to God and godliness, as the nature of a serpent hath to a man: and when all that we can say goes against an habitual inclination of their natures, no marvel if it prevail little.

2. They are in darkness, and know not the very things they hear. Like a man that was born blind, and hears a high commendation of the light; but what will hearing do unless he sees it? They know not what God is, nor what is the power of the cross of Christ, nor what the Spirit of holiness is, nor what it is to live in love by faith; they know not the certainty, and suitableness, and excellency of the heavenly inheritance. They know not what conversion and a holy mind and conversation is, even when they hear of it. They are in a mist of ignorance. They are lost and bewildered in sin; like a man that has lost himself in the night, and knows not where he is, nor how to come to himself again, till the daylight recover him.

3. They are wilfully confident that they need no conversion, but only some partial amendment, and that they are in the way to heaven already, and are converted when they art not. And if you meet a man that is quite out of his way, you may long enough call on him to turn back again, if he will not believe that he is out of the way.

4. They are become slaves to their flesh, and drowned in the world, to make provision for it. Their lusts, and passions, and appetites have distracted them, and got such power over them that they cannot tell how to deny them, or how to mind any thing else; so that the drunkard saith, I love a cup of good drink, and I cannot forbear; the glutton saith, I love good cheer, and I cannot forbear; the fornicator saith, I love to have my lust fulfilled, and I cannot forbear; and the gamester loves to have his sports, and he cannot forbear. So that they are become even captivated slaves to their flesh, and their very wilfulness is become an impotency; and what they would not do, they say they cannot. And the worldling is so taken up with earthly things, that he hath neither heart, nor mind, nor time for heavenly; but, as in Pharaoh's dream, Gen. 41:4, the lean kine did eat up the fat ones, so this lean and barren earth doth eat up all the thoughts of heaven.

5. Some are so carried away by the stream of evil company, that they are possessed with hard thoughts of a godly life, by hearing them speak against it; or at least they think they may venture to do as they see most do, and so they hold on in their sinful ways; and when one is cut off and cast into hell, and another snatched away from among them to the same condemnation, it doth not much daunt them, because they see not whither they are gone. Poor wretches, they hold on in their ungodliness for all this; for they little know that their companions are now lamenting it in torments. In Luke 16, the rich man in hell would fain have had one to warn his five brethren, lest they should come to that place of torment. It is likely he knew their minds and lives, and

knew that they were hasting thither, and little dreamed that he was there, yea, and would little have believed one that should have told them so.

I remember an occurrence that a gentleman, yet living, told me he saw upon a bridge over the Severn.* A man was driving a flock of fat lambs, and something meeting them and hindering their passage, one of the lambs leaped upon the wall of the bridge, and his legs slipping he fell into the stream; and the rest seeing him, did, one after another, leap over the bridge into the stream, till all or almost all were drowned. Those that were behind little knew what was become of them that were gone before, but thought they might venture to follow their compaions; but as soon as ever they were over the wall, and falling headlong, the case was altered. Even so it is with unconverted, carnal men. One dieth by them and drops into hell, and another follows the same way; and yet they will go after them, because they think not whither they are going. O, but when death hath once opened their eyes, and they see what is on the other side of the wall, even in another world, then what would they give to be where they were!

6. Moreover, they have a subtle, malicious enemy, that is unseen of them, and plays his game in the dark; and it is his principal business to hinder their conversion; and therefore to keep them where they are, by persuading them not to believe the Scriptures, or not to trouble their minds with these matters; or by persuading them to think ill of a godly life, or to think that more is enjoined than need be, and that they may be saved without conversion, and without all this stir; and that God is so merciful that he will not damn any such as they; or at least, that they may stay a little longer, and take their pleasure, and follow the world a little longer yet, and then let it go, and repent hereafter. And by such juggling, deluding cheats as these, the devil keeps the most in his captivity, and leadeth them to his misery.

These, and such like impediments as these, do keep so many thousands unconverted, when God hath done so much, and Christ hath suffered so much, and ministers have said so much for their conversion. When their reasons are silenced and they are not able to answer the Lord that calls after them, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" yet all comes to nothing with the greatest part of them; and they leave us no more to do, after all, but to sit down and lament their wilful misery.

I have now showed you the reasonableness of God's commands, and the unreasonableness of wicked men's disobedience. If nothing will serve to persuade them, but men will yet refuse to turn, we are next to consider who is in fault if they be damned. And this brings me to the last doctrine; which is,

---

DOCTRINE VII.

That if after all this men will not turn, it is not the fault of God that they are condemned, but their own, even their own wilfulness. They die because they will, that is, because they will not turn.

If you will go to hell, what remedy? God here acquits himself of your blood; it shall not lie on him if you be lost. A negligent minister may draw it upon him; and those that encourage you or hinder you not in sin, may draw it upon them; but be sure of it, it shall not lie upon God. Saith the Lord, concerning his unprofitable vineyard, "Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard: what could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" Isa. 5:1-4. When he had planted it in a fruitful soil, and fenced it, and

*Mr. R. Rowly, of Shrewsbury, upon Acham-Bridge.

gathered out the stones, and planted it with the choicest vines, what should he have done more to it? He hath made you men, and endowed you with reason; he hath furnished you with all external necessaries; all creatures are at your service; he hath given you a righteous, perfect law. When you had broken it and undone yourselves, he had pity on you, and sent his Son by a miracle of condescending mercy to die for you, and be a sacrifice for your sins; and he was in Christ reconciling the world to himself!

The Lord Jesus hath made you a deed of gift of himself, and eternal life with him, on the condition you will but accept it, and return. He hath on this reasonable condition offered you the free pradon of all your sins! he hath written this in his word, and sealed it by his Spirit, and sent it by his ministers: they have made the offer to you a hundred and a hundred times, and called you to accept it, and to turn to God. They have in his name entreated you, and reasoned the case with you, and answered all your frivolous objections. He hath long waited on you, and stayed your leisure, and suffered you to abuse him to his face! He hath mercifully sustained you in the midst of your sins; he hath compassed you about with all sorts of mercies; he hath also intermixed afflictions, to remind you of your folly and call you to your senses, and his Spirit has been often striving with your hearts, saying, "Turn, sinner, turn to him that calleth thee. Whither art thou going? What art thou doing? Dost thou know what will be the end? How long wilt thou hate thy friends and love thine enemies? When wilt thou let go all, and turn and deliver up thyself to God, and give thy Redeemer the possession of thy soul? When shall it once be?" These pleadings have been used with thee, and when thou hast delayed, thou hast been urged to make haste, and God hath called to thee, "To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not thy heart." Why not listen now without any more delay?

Life hath been set before you; the joys of heaven have been opened to you in the Gospel; the certainty of them hath been manifested; the certainty of the everlasting torments of the damned hath been declared to you—unless you would have had a sight of heaven and hell, what could you desire more? Christ hath been, as it were, set forth crucified before your eyes. Gal. 3:1. You have been a hundred times told that you are but lost men till you come unto him: as often you have been told of the evil of sin, of the vanity of sin, the world, and all the pleasures and wealth it can afford; of the shortness and uncertainty of your lives, and the endless duration of the joy or torment of the life to come. All this, and more than this have you been told, and told again, even till you were weary of hearing it, and till you could make the lighter of it, because you had so often heard it, like the smith's dog, that is brought by custom to sleep under the noise of the hammers and when the sparks fly about his ears; and though all this have not converted you, yet you are alive, and might have mercy to this day, if you had but hearts to entertain it. And now let reason itself be the judge, whether it be the fault of God, or of yourselves, if after all this you will be unconverted and be damned. If you die now, it is because you will die.

What should be said more to you, or what course should be taken that is more likely to prevail? Are you able to say, and make it good, " We would fain have been converted and become new creatures, but we could not; we would fain have forsaken our sins, but we could not; we would have changed our company, and our thoughts, and our discourse, but we could not." Why could you not if you would? What hindered you but the wickedness of your hearts? Who forced you to sin, or who held you back from duty? Had not you the same teaching, and time, and liberty to be godly, as your godly neighbors had? Why then could not you have been godly as

well as they? Were the church-doors shut against you, or did you not keep away yourselves, or sit and sleep, or hear as if you did not hear? Did God put in any exceptions against you in his word, when he invited sinners to return; and when he promised mercy to those that do return? Did he say, "I will pardon all that repent except thee?" Did he shut thee out from the liberty of his holy worship? Did he forbid you to pray to him many more than others? You know he did not. God did not drive you away from him, but you forsook him, and ran away yourselves, and when he called you to him, you would not come.

If God had excepted you out of the general promise and offer of mercy, or had said to you, "Stand off, I will have nothing to do with such as you; pray not to me, for I will not hear you; if you repent never so much, and cry for mercy never so much, I will not regard you"—if God had left you nothing to trust to but desperation, then you had a fair excuse; you might have said, "To what end should I repent and turn, when it will do no good?" But this was not your case: you might have had Christ to be your Lord and Saviour, your head and husband, as well as others, and you would not, because you felt yourselves not sick enough for the physician; and because you could not spare your disease. In your hearts you said as those rebels, Luke 19:14, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Christ would have gathered you under the wings of his salvation, and you would not. Matt. 23:37. What desires of your welfare did the Lord express in his holy word! With what compassion did he stand over you and say, "O that my peolpe had hearkened unto me, and that they had walked in my ways!" Psalm 81:13. "O that there were such a heart in this people, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children for ever!" Deut. 5:29. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end." Deut. 32:29. He would have been your God, and done all for you that your souls could well desire; but you loved the world and your flesh above him, and therefore you would not hearken to him, though you complimented him, and gave him high titles; yet when it came to the closing, you would have none of him. Psalm 81:11, 12. No marvel, then, if he gave you up to your own hearts' lusts, and you walked in your own counsels.

He condescends to reason, and pleads the case with you, and asks you, "What is there in me, or my service, that you should be so much against me? What harm have I done thee, sinner? Have I deserved this unkind dealing at thy hand? Many mercies have I showed thee: for which of them dost thou thus despise me? Is it I, or is it Satan that is thy enemy? Is it I, or is it thy carnal self that would undo thee? Is it a holy life, or a life of sin, that thou hast cause to fly from? If thou be undone, thou procurest this to thyself, by forsaking me, the Lord that would have saved thee." Jer .2:17. "Doth not thy own wickedness correct thee, and thy sin reprove thee? Thou mayest see that it is an evil and bitter thing that thou hast forsaken me." Jer. 2:19. "What iniquity have you found in me that you have followed after vanity, and forsaken me?" Jer. 2:5, 6. He calleth out, as it were, to the brutes, to hear the controversy he hath against you. "Hear, O ye mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me, for I brought thee up out of Egypt, and redeemed thee." Micah 6:2, 3. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider! Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a

seed of evil-doers!" etc. Isaiah 1:2, 4. "Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy Father that bought thee? Hath he not made thee, and established thee?" Deut. 32:6. When he saw that you forsook him, even for nothing, and turned away from the Lord of life to hunt after the chaff and feathers of the world, he told you of your folly, and called you to a more profitable employment, Isaiah 55:2-7. "Wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found: call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return into the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isa. 55:2-7; and so chap. 1:16-18.

And when you would not hear, what complaints have you caused him to bring against you! charging it on you as your wilfulness and stubbornness. "Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Jer. 2:12, 13. Many a time hath Christ proclaimed that free invitation to you, "Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev. 22:17. But you put him to complain, after all his offers, "They will not come to me, that they may have life." John 5:40. He hath invited you to feast with him in the kingdom of his grace, and you have had excuses from your grounds, and your cattle, and your worldly business; and when you would not come, you have said you could not and provoked him to resolve that you should never taste of his supper. Luke 14:16-25. And who is it the fault of now but yourselves? and what can you say is the chief cause of your damnation but your own wills? you would be damned. The whole case is laid open by Christ himself. "Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse—How long, ye smple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof; therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth to me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from the fear of evil." Prov. 1:20-33. I thought best to recite the whole text at large to you, because it doth so fully show the cause of the destruction of the wicked. It is not because God would not teach them, but because they would not learn. It is not because God would not call them, but because they would not turn at his reproof. Their wilfulness is their undoing.

From what hath been said, you may further learn these following things:

1. From hence you may see not only what blashemy and impiety it is to

lay the blame of men's destruction upon God, but also how unfit these wicked wretches are to bring in such a charge against their Maker! They cry out upon God, and say that he gives them no grace, and that his threatenings are severe, and that it is unreasonable that all should be condemned who are not converted and sanctified; and they think it hard measure that a short sin should have an endless suffering; and if they be damned they say they cannot help it, when in the meantime they are bringing about their own destruction, even the destruction of their own souls, and will not be persuaded to hold their hands. They think God were cruel if he should condemn them, and yet they are so cruel to themselves that they will run into the fire of hell, when God hath told them it is but a little before them; and neither entreaties nor threatenings, nor any thing that can be said, will stop them.

We see them almost undone; their careless, worldly, fleshly lives tell us that they are in the power of the devil; we know, if they die before they are converted, all the world cannot save them; and knowing the uncertainty of their lives, we are afraid every day lest they drop into the fire; and therefore we entreat them to pity their own souls, and not to undo themselves when mercy is at hand, but they will not hear us. We entreat them to cast away their sin, and come to Christ without delay, and to have some mercy on themselves, but they will have none; and yet they think that God must be cruel if he condemn them.

O wilful, miserable sinners! it is not God that is cruel to you, it is you that are cruel to yourselves; you are told you must turn or burn, and yet you turn not. You are told that if you will needs keep your sins, you shall keep the curse of God with them, and yet you will keep them. You are told that there is no way to happiness but by holiness, and yet you will not be holy. What would you have God say more to you? What would you have him do with his mercy? He offereth it to you, and you will not have it. You are in the ditch of sin and misery, and he would give you his hand to help you out, and you refuse his help; he would cleanse you of your sins, and you had rather keep them; you love your lust, and love your gluttony, and sports, and drunkenness, and will not let them go. Would you have him bring you to heaven whether you will or not? Or would you have him bring you and your sins to heaven together? That is an impossibility; you may as well expect he should turn the sun into darkness. What! an unsanctified fleshly heart be in heaven! it cannot be. There entereth into it nothing that is unclean. Rev. 21:27. "For what communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?" "All the day long hath he stretched out his hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people." 2 Cor. 6:14, 15; Rom. 10:21.

What will you do now? Will you cry to God for mercy? Why, God calleth upon you to have mercy upon yourselves, and you will not? Ministers see the poisoned cup in the drunkard's hand, and tell him there is poison in it, and desire him to have mercy on his soul, and forbear, and he will not hear us! Drink it he must and will; he loves it, and therefore, though hell comes next, he saith he cannot help it. What should one say to such men as these? We tell the ungodly careless worldling, it is not such a life that will serve the turn, or ever bring you to heaven. If a lion were at your back you would mend your pace; and when the curse of God is at your back, and Satan and hell are at your back, will you not stir, but ask, What need of all this ado? Is an immortal soul of no more worth? O have mercy upon yourselves! But they will have no mercy on themselves, nor once regard us. We tell them the end will be bitter. Who can dwell with everlasting fire? And yet they will have no mercy on themselves. Still will these shameless transgressors say that God is more merciful than to condemn them, when it is themselves

that cruelly and unmercifully run upon condemnation; and if we should go to them and entreat them, we cannot stop them; if we should fall on our knees to them we cannot stop them, but to hell they will go, and yet will not believe that they are going thither.

If we beg of them, for the sake of God that made them, and preserveth them; for the sake of Christ that died for them; for the sake of their own souls, to pity themselves, and go no further in the way to hell, but come to Christ while his arms are open, and into the state of life while the door stands open, and now take mercy while mercy may be had, they will not be persuaded. If we should die for it, we cannot so much as get them now and then to consider with themselves of the matter, and turn; and yet they can say, "I hope God will be merciful." Did you never consider what he saith, Isa. 27:11, "It is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favor." If another man will not clothe you when you are naked, and feed you when you are hungry, you will say he is unmerciful. If he should cast you into prison, or beat and torment you, you would say he is unmerciful: and yet you will do a thousand times more against yourselves, even cast away both soul and body for ever, and never complain of your own unmercifulness! Yea, and God that waited upon you all the while with his mercy, must be taken to be unmerciful, if he punish you after all this. Unless the holy God of heaven will give these ungodly men leave to trample upon his Son's blood, and with the Jews, as it were, again to spit in his face, and do despite to the Spirit of grace, and make a jest of sin, and a mock at holiness, and set more light by saving mercy than by their fleshly pleasures; and unless, after all this, he will save them by the mercy which they cast away, and would have none of, God himself must be called unmerciful by them! But he will be justified when he judgeth, and he will not stand or fall at the bar of a sinful worm.

I know there are many particular cavils that are brought by them against the Lord; but I shall not here stay to answer them particularly, having done it already in my **Treatise of Judgment,** to which I shall refer them. Had the disputing part of the world been as careful to avoid sin and destruction as they have been busy in searching after the cause of them, and forward indirectly to impute them to God, they might have exercised their wits more profitably, and have less wronged God, and sped better themselves. When so ugly a monster as sin is within us, and so heavy a thing as punishment is on us, and so dreadful a thing as hell is before us, one would think it would be an easy question who is in the fault; whether God or man be the principal or culpable cause. Some men are such favorable judges of themselves, that they are more prone to accuse infinite perfection and goodness itself, than their own hearts, and imitate their first parents, who said, "The serpent tempted me; and the woman that thou gavest me gave unto me, and I did eat;" secretly implying that God was the cause. So say they, "The understanding that thou gavest me was unable to discern; the will that thou gavest me was unable to make a better choice; the objects which thou didst set before me did entice me; the temptations which thou didst permit to assault me prevailed against me." And some are so loath to think that God can make a self-determining creature, that they dare not deny him that which they take to be his prerogative, to be the determiner of the will in every sin, as the first efficient immediate physical cause; and many could be content to acquit God from so much causing of evil, if they could but reconcile it with his being the chief cause of good; as if truths would be no longer truths than we are able to see them in their perfect order and coherence: because our ravelled wits cannot set them right together, nor assign each

truth its proper place, we presume to conclude that some must be cast away. This is the fruit of proud self-conceitedness, when men receive not God's truth as children, in holy submsision to the omniscience of our Teacher, but as censurers that are too wise to learn.

Objection. But we cannot convert ourselves till God convert us; we can do nothing without his grace; it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.

Answer. God hath two degrees of mercy to show: the mercy of conversion first, and the mercy of salvation last; the latter he will give to none but those that **will** and **run**, and hath promised it to them only. The former is to make them willing that are unwilling; and though your own willingness and endeavors deserve not his grace, yet your wilful refusal deserveth that it should be denied to you. Your disability is your very unwillingness itself, which excuseth not your sin, but maketh it the greater. You could turn if you were but truly willing; and if your wills themselves are so corrupted that nothing but effectual grace will move them, you have the more cause to seek for that grace, and yield to it, and do what you can in the use of means, and not neglect it and set yourselves against it. Do what you are able first, and then complain of God for denying you grace, if you have cause.

Objection. But you seem to intimate all this while that man hath free will.

Answer. The dispute about free will is beyond your capacity; I shall therefore now trouble you with no more but this about it. Your will is naturally a free, that is, a self-determining faculty; but it is viciously inclined, and backward to do good; and therefore we see, by sad experience, that it hath not a virtuous moral freedom; but this is the wickedness of it which deserveth the punishment; and I pray you let us not befool ourselves with opinions. Let the case be your own. If you had an enemy who was so malicious as to fall upon you, and beat you, or take away the lives of your children, would you excuse him because he said, I have not free will: it is my nature, I cannot choose unless God give me grace? If you had a servant that robbed you, would you take such an answer from him? Might not every thief and murderer that is hanged at the assize give such an answer: I have not free will; I cannot change my own heart; what can I do without God's grace? and shall they therefore be aquitted? If not, why then should you think to be acquitted for a course of sin against the Lord?

2. From hence also you may observe these three things together: 1. What a subtle temper Satan is. 2. What a deceitful thing sin is. 3. What a foolish, corrupted creature man is. A subtle tempter, indeed, that can persuade the greatest part of the world to go into everlasting fire, when they have so many warnings and dissuasives as they have! A deceitful thing is sin, indeed, that can bewitch so many thousands to part with everlasting life for a thing so base and utterly unworthy! A foolish creature is man, indeed, that will be cheated of his salvation for nothing, yea, for a known nothing; and that by an enemy, and a known enemy. You would think it impossible that any man in his senses should be persuaded for a trifle to cast himself into the fire, or water, or into a coal-pit, to the destruction of his life; and yet men will be enticed to cast themselves into hell. If your natural lives were in your own hand, that you should not die till you would kill yourselves, how long would most of you live! And yet, when everlasting life is so far in your own hands, under God, that you cannot be undone till you undo yourselves, how few of you will forbear your own undoing! Ah, what a silly thing is man! and what a bewitching and befooling thing is sin!

3. From hence, also, you may learn, that it is no great wonder if wicked

men be hinderers of others in the way to heaven, and would have as many unconverted as they can, and would draw them into sin, and keep them in it. Can you expect that they should have mercy on others, that have none upon themselves? and that they should hesitate much at the destruction of others, that hesitate not to destroy themselves? They do not worse by others than they do by themselves.

4. Lastly: You may hence learn that the greatest enemy to man is himself; and the greatest judgment in this life that can befall him, is to be left to himself; and that the great work that grace hath to do, is to save us from ourselves; and that the greatest accusations and complaints of men should be against themselves; and that the greatest work we have to do ourselves, is to resist ourselves; and the greatest enemy that we should daily pray, and watch, and strive against, is our own carnal hearts and wills; and the greatest part of your work, if you would do good to others, and help them to heaven, is to save them from themselves, even from their own blind understandings, and corrupted wills, and perverse affections, and violent passions, and unruly senses. I only name all these for brevity's sake, and leave them to your further consideration.

Well, sirs, now we have found out the great delinquent and murderer of souls, even men's selves, their own wills, what remains but that you judge according to the evidence, and confess this great iniquity before the Lord, and be humbled for it, and do so no more? To these three ends distinctly I shall add a few words more. 1. Further to convince you. 2. To humble you. And, 3. To reform you, if there yet be any hope.

1. We know so much of the exceeding gracious nature of God, who is willing to do good, and delighteth to show mercy, that we have no reason to suspect him of being the culpable cause of our death, or to call him cruel: he made all good, and he preserveth and maintaineth all; the eyes of all wait upon him, and he giveth them their meat in due season; he openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desires of all the living. Psalm 145:15, 16. He is not only righteous in all his ways, and therefore will deal justly; and holy in all his works, and therefore not the author of sin; but he is also good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. Psalm 145:17, 19.

But as for man, we know his mind is dark, his will perverse, and his affections carry him so headlong, that he is fitted by his folly and corruption to such a work as the destroying of himself. If you saw a lamb lie killed in the way, would you sooner suspect the sheep or the wolf to be the author of it, if they both stand by? Or if you see a house broken open, and the people murdered, would you sooner suspect the prince or judge, that is wise and just, and had no need, or a known thief or murderer? I say, therefore, as James, 1:13-15, "Let no man say, when he is tempted, that he is tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man, (to draw him to sin;) but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." You see here that sin is the offspring of your own concupiscence, and not to be charged on God: and that death is the offspring of your own sin, and the fruit which it will yield you as soon as it is ripe. You have a treasure of evil in yourselves, as a spider hath of poison, from whence you are bringing forth hurt to yourselves, and spinning such webs as entangle your own souls. Your nature shows it is you that are the cause.

2. It is evident that you are your own destroyers, in that you are so ready to entertain any temptation almost that is offered to you. Satan is scarcely more ready to move you to any evil, than you are ready to hear and to

do as he would have you. If he would tempt your understanding to error and prejudice, you yield. If he would hinder you from good resolutions it is soon done. If he would cool any good desires or affections, it is soon done. If he will put you on to evil thoughts, words, or deeds, you are so free that he needs no rod or spur. If he would keep you from holy thoughts, and words, and ways, a little does it, you need no curb. You examine not his suggestions, nor resist them with any resolution, nor cast them out as he casts them in, nor quench the sparks which he endeavoreth to kindle; but you set in with him, and meet him half way, and embrace his motions, and tempt him to tempt you. And it is easy for him to catch such greedy fish that are ranging for a bait, and will take the bare hook.

3. Your destruction is evidently of yourselves, in that you resist all that would help to save you, and would do you good, or hinder you from undoing yourselves. God would help and save you by his word, and you resist it; it is too strict for you. He would sanctify you by his Spirit, and you resist and quench it. If any man reprove you for your sin, you fly in his face with evil words; and if he would draw you to a holy life, and tell you of present danger, you give him little thanks, but either bid him look to himself, he will not have to answer for you; or at best you put him off with heartless thanks, and will not turn when you are entreated. If ministers would privately instruct and help you, you will not come to them; your unhumbled souls feel but little need of their help; if hey would teach you, you are too old to be taught, though you are too old to be ignorant and unholy. Whatever they can say to you for your good, you are so self-conceited and wise in your own eyes, even in the depth of ignorance, that you will regard nothing that agreeth not with your present conceits, but contradict your teachers, as if you were wiser than they; you resist all that they can say to you, by your ignorance, and wilfulness, and foolish cavils, and shifting evasions, and unthankful rejections, so that no good that is offered can find any welcome, or acceptance, or entertainment with you.

4. Moreover, it is apparent that you are self-destroyers, in that you "draw the matter of your sin and destruction even from the blessed God himself." You like not the contrivances of his wisdom; you like not his justice, but take it for cruelty; you like not his holiness, but are ready to think he is such a one as yourselves, Psalm 50:21, and makes as light of sin as you do; you like not his truth, but would have his threatenings, even his peremptory threatenings prove false; and his goodness, which you seem most highly to approve, you partly resist, as it would lead you to repentance; and partly abuse, to the strengthening of your sin, as if you might more freely sin because God is merciful, and because his grace doth so much abound.

5. Yea, you draw down destruction even from the blessed Redeemer, and death from the Lord of life himself! and nothing more emboldeneth you in sin, than that Christ hath died for you; as if now the danger of death were over, and you might boldly venture; as if Christ were become a servant to Satan and your sins, and must wait upon you while you are abusing him; and because he is become the Physician of souls, and is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, you think he must suffer you to refuse his help, and throw away his remedies, and must save you whether you will come to God by him or not: so that a great part of your sins are occasioned by your bold presumption upon the death of Christ, not considering that he came to redeem his people from their sins, and to sanctify them a peculiar people to himself, and to conform them in holiness to the image of their heavenly Father, and to their head. Matt. 1:21; Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:15, 16; Coloss. 3:10, 11; Phil. 3:9, 10.

6. You also draw your own destruction from all the providences and works of God. When you think of his eternal foreknowledge and decrees, it is to harden you in your sin, or possess your minds with quarrelling thoughts, as if his decrees might spare you the labor of repentance and a holy life, or else were the cause of your sin and death. If he afflict you, you repine; if he prosper you, you the more forget him, and are the more backward to the thoughts of the life to come. If the wicked prosper, you forget the end that will set all reckonings straight, and are ready to think it is as good to be wicked as godly; and thus you draw your death from all.

7. And you pervert to your ruin all the creatures and mercies of God to you. He giveth them to you as the tokens of his love and furniture for his service, and you turn them against him, to the pleasing of your flesh. You eat and drink to please your appetite, and not for the glory of God and to enable you to perform his work. Your clothes you abuse to pride; your riches draw your hearts from heaven, Phil. 3:18; your honors and applause puff you up; if you have health and strength, it makes you more secure, and you forget your end. Yea, other men's mercies are abused by you to your hurt. If you see their honors and dignity, you are provoked to envy them; if you see their riches, you are ready to covet them; if you look upon beauty, you are stirred up to lust; and it is well if godliness itself be not an eyesore to you.

8. The very gifts that God bestoweth on you, and the ordinances of grace which he hath instituted for his church, you turn to sin. If you have better parts than others, you grow proud and self-conceited; if you have but common gifts, you take them for special grace. You take the bare hearing of your duty for so good a work, as if it would excuse you for not obeying it. Your prayers are turned into sin, because you "regard iniquity in your hearts," and depart not from iniquity when you call on the name of the Lord. Psalm 66:18; 2 Tim. 2:19. Your "prayers are abominable, because you turn away your ear from hearing the law," and are more ready to offer the sacrifice of fools, thinking you do God some special service, than to hear his word and obey it. Prov. 28:9; Eccles. 5:1.

9. Yes, the persons that you converse with, and all their actions, you make the occasions of your sin and destruction. If they live in the fear of God you hate them. If they live ungodly, you imitate them; if the wicked are many, you think you may the more boldly follow them; if the godly be few, you are the more emboldened to despise them. If they walk exactly, you think they are too precise; if one of them fall in a particular temptation, you stumble and turn away from holiness because others are imperfectly holy; as if you were warranted to break your necks because some others have, by their heedlessness, sprained a sinew or put out a bone. If a hypocrite discover himself, you say, "They are all alike," and think yourselves as honest as the best. A professor can scarce slip into any miscarriage, but because he cuts his finger you think you may boldly cut your throats. If ministers deal plainly with you, you say they rail. If they speak gently or coldly, you either sleep under them, or are little more affected than the seats you sit upon. If any errors creep into the church, some greedily entertain them, and others reproach the Christian doctrine for them, which is most against them. And if we would draw you from any ancient rooted error, which can but plead two, or three, or six, or seven hundred years' custom, you are as much offended with a motion for reformation as if you were to lose your life by it, and hold fast old errors, while you cry out against new ones. Scarce a difference can arise among the ministers of the Gospel but you will draw your own death from it; and you will not hear, or at least not obey, the unquestionable doctrine of any of those that agree not with your conceits. One will not hear a

minister because he readeth his sermons; another will not hear him because he doth not read them. One will not hear him because he saith the Lord's prayer; and another will not hear him because he doth not use it. One will not not hear them that are of episcopacy; and another will not hear them that are against it. And thus I might show you many other cases, how you turn all that comes near you to your own destruction; so clear is it that the ungodly are self-destroyers, and that their perdition is of themselves.

Methinks now, upon the consideration of what is said, and the review of your own ways, you should bethink you what you have done, and be ashamed and deeply **humbled** to remember it. If you be not, I pray you consider these following truths:

1. To be your own destroyers is to sin against the deepest principle in your natures, even the principle of self-preservation. Every thing naturally desireth or inclineth to its own felicity, welfare, or perfection; and will you set yourselves to your own destruction? When you are commanded to love your neighbors as yourselves, it is supposed that you naturally love yourselves; but if you love your neighbors no better than yourselves, it seems you would have all the world to be damned.

2. How extremely do you cross your own intentions. I know you intend not your own damnation, even when you are procuring it; you think you are but doing good to yourselves, by gratifying the desires of your flesh. But, alas, it is but as a draught of cold water in a burning fever, or as the scratching of an itching wildfire, which increaseth the disease and pain. If indeed you would have pleasure, profit, or honor, seek them where they are to be found, and do not hunt after them in the way to hell.

3. What pity is it that you should do that against yourselves which none else on earth or in hell can do! If all the world were combined against you, or all the devils in hell were combined against you, they could not destroy you without yourselves, nor make you sin but by your own consent: and will you do that against yourselves which no one else can do? You have hateful thoughts of the devil, because he is your enemy, and endeavoreth your destruction; and will you be worse than devils to yourselves? Why, thus it is with you, if you had hearts to understand it: when you run into sin, and run from godliness, and refuse to turn at the call of God, you do more against your own souls than men or devils could do besides; and if you should set yourselves and bend your wits to do yourselves the greatest mischief, you could not devise to do a greater.

4. You are false to the trust that God hath reposed in you. He hath much intrusted you with your own salvation; and will you betray your trust? He hath set you, with all diligence, to keep your hearts; and is this the keeping of them? Prov. 4:23.

5. You do even forbid all others to pity you, when you will have no pity on yourselves. If you cry to God in the day of your calamnity for mercy, mercy; what can you expect, but that he should thrust you away, and say, "Nay, thou wouldst not have mercy on thyself: who brought this upon thee but thy own wilfulness?" And if your brethren see you everlastingly in misery, how shall they pity you that were your own destroyers, and would not be dissuaded?

6. It will everlastingly make you your own tormentors in hell, to think that you brought yourselves wilfully to that misery. O what a piercing thought it will be, for ever to think with yourselves that this was your own doing; that you were warned of this day, and warned again, but it would not do; that you wilfully sinned, and wilfully turned away from God; that you had time as well as others, but you abused it; you had teachers as well as others, but you re-

fused their instruction; you had only examples, but you did not imitate them; you were offered Christ, and grace, and glory, as well as others, but you had more mind to your fleshly pleasures: you had a price in your hands, but you had not a heart to lay it out. Prov. 17:16. Can it fail to torment you to think of this your present folly? O that your eyes were open to see what you have done in the wilful wronging of your own souls; and that you better understand these words of God, "Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors; for whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death." Prov. 8:33-36.

And now I am come to **the conclusion** of this work, my heart is troubled to think how I shall leave you, lest after this the flesh should still deceive you, and the world and the devil should keep you asleep, and I should leave you as I found you, till you awake in hell. Though in the case of your poor souls, I am afraid of this, as knowing the obstinacy of a carnal heart; yet I can say with the prophet Jeremiah, "I have not desired the woful day, thou Lord knowest." 17:16. I am not, with James and John, desired that "fire might come from heaven" to consume them that refused Jesus Christ. Luke 9:54. But it is the preventing of the eternal fire that I have been all this while endeavoring: and O that it had been a needless work! that God and conscience might have been as willing to spare me this labor as some of you could have been. Dear friends, I am so loath that you should lie in everlasting fire, and be shut out of heaven, if it be possible to prevent it, that I shall once more ask you, What do you now resolve? Will you turn, or die? I look upon you as a physician on his patient in a dangerous disease, that saith to him, "Though you are far gone, take but this medicine, and forbear but these few things that are hurtful to you, and I dare warrant your life; but if you will not do this you are but a dead man." What would you think of such a man, if the physician, and all the friends he hath, cannot persuade him to take one medicine to save his life, or to forbear one or two poisonous things that would kill him? This is your case. As far as you are gone in sin, do but now turn and come to Christ, and take his remedies, and your souls shall live. Cast up your deadly sins by repentance, and return not to the poisonous vomit any more, and you shall do well. But yet, if it were your bodies that we had to deal with, we might partly know what to do for you. Though you would not consent, yet you might be held or bound while the medicine was poured down your throats, and hurtful things might be kept from you. But about your souls it cannot be so; we cannot convert you against your wills. There is no carrying madmen to heaven in fetters. You may be condemned against your wills, because you sinned with your wills; but you cannot be saved against your wills. The wisdom of God has thought meet to lay men's salvation or destruction exceeding much upon the choice of their own will, that no man shall come to heaven that chose not the way to heaven; and no man shall come to hell, but shall be forced to say, "I have the thing I chose, my own will did bring me hither." Now, if I could but get you to be willing, to be thoroughly, and solvedly, and habitually willing, the work were more than half done. And alas, must we lost our friends, and must they lose their God, their happiness, their souls, for want of this? O God forbid! It is a strange thing to me that men are so unnatural and stupid in the greatest matters, who in lesser things are civil and courteous, and good neighbors.

For aught I know, I have the love of all, or almost all my neighbors, so far, that if I should send to any man in the town, or parish, or country, and request a reasonable courtesy of them, they would grant it me; and yet when

I come to request of them the greatest matter in the world, for themselves and not for me, I can have nothing of many of them but a patient hearing. I know not whether people think a man in the pulpit is in good earnest or not, and means as he speaks; for I think I have few neighbors but if I were sitting familiarly with them, and telling them what I have seen and done, or known in the world, they would believe me and regard what I say; but when I tell them from the infallible word of God, what they themselves shall see and know in the world to come, they show by their lives that they do either not believe it or not much regard it. If I met any one of them on the way, and told them yonder is a coal-pit, or there is a quicksand, or there are thieves lying in wait for you, I could persuade them to turn by; but when I tell them that Satan lieth in wait for them, and that sin is poison to them, and that hell is not a matter to be jested with, they go on as if they did not hear me. Truly, neighbors, I am in as good earnest with you in the pulpit as I am in my familiar discourse; and if ever you will regard me, I beseech you let it be here.

I think there is not a man of you all, but if my own soul lay at your wills, you would be willing to save it, though I cannot promise that you would leave your sins for it. Tell me, thou drunkard, art thou so cruel to me, that thou wouldst not forbear a few cups of drink, if thou knewest it would save my soul from hell? Hadst thou rather that I did burn there for ever than thou shouldst live soberly as other men do? If so, may I not say, thou art an unmerciful monster, and not a man? If I came hungry or naked to one of your doors would you not part with more than a cup of drink to relieve me? I am confident you would. If it were to save my life, I know you would, some of you, hazard your own; and yet will you not be entreated to part with your sensual pleasures for your own salvation? Wouldst thou forbear a hundred cups of drink to save my life, if it were in thy power, and wilt thou not do it to save thy own soul? I profess to you, sirs, I am as hearty a beggar with you this day for the saving of your own souls, as I would be for my own supply, if I were forced to come begging to your doors; and therefore if you would hear me then, hear me now. If you would pity me then, be entreated now to pity yourselves. I do again beseech you, as if it were on my bended knees, that you would hearken to your Redeemer, and turn, that you may live.

All you that have lived in ignorance, and carelessness, and presumption to this day; all you that have been drowned in the cares of the world, and have no mind of God and eternal glory; all you that are enslaved to your fleshly desires of meats and drinks, sports and lusts; and all you that know not the necessity of holiness, and never were acquainted with the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost upon your souls; that never embraced your blessed Redeemer by a lively faith, and with admiring and thankful apprehensions of his love; and that never felt a higher estimation of God and heaven, and a heartier love to them than to your fleshly prosperity, and the things below; I earnestly beseech you, not only for my sake, but for the Lord's sake, and for your soul's sake, that you go not on one day longer in your former condition, but look about you, and cry to God for converting grace, that you may be made new creatures, and may escape the plagues that are but a little before you. And if ever you will do any thing for me, grant me this request, to turn from your evil ways and live. Deny me any thing that ever I shall ask you for myself, if you will but grant me this; and if you deny me this, I care not for any thing else that you would grant me. Nay, as ever you will do any thing at the request of the Lord that made you, and redeemed you, deny him not this; for if you deny him this, he cares for nothing that you shall grant him. As

ever you would have him hear your prayers, and grant your requests, and do for you at the hour of death and day of judgment, or in any of your extremities, deny not his request now in the day of your prosperity. O sirs, believe it, death and judgment, and heaven and hell, are other matters when you come near them, than they seem to carnal eyes afar off: then you would hear such a message as I bring you with more awakened, regardful hearts.

Well, though I cannot hope so well of all, I will hope that some of you are by this time purposing to turn and live; and that you are ready to ask me, as the Jews did Peter when they were pricked in their hearts and said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Acts 2:37. How may we come to be truly converted? We are willing, if we did but know our duty. God forbid that we should choose destruction by refusing conversion, as hitherto we have done.

If these be the thoughts and purposes of your hearts, I say of you as God did of a promising people, Deut. 5:28, 29, "They have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always!" Your purposes are good: O that there were but a heart in you to perform these purposes! And in hope hereof I shall gladly give you direction what to do, and that but briefly, that you may the more easily remember it for your practice.

Direction I. If you would be converted and saved, labor to understand the necessity and true nature of conversion; for what, and from what, and to what, and by what it is that you must turn.

Consider in what a lamentable condition you are till the hour of your conversion, that you may see it is not a state to be rested in. You are under the guilt of all the sins that ever you committed, and under the wrath of God and the curse of his law; you are bondslaves to the devil, and daily employed in his work against the Lord, yourselves, and others; you are spiritually dead and deformed, as being devoid of the holy life, and nature, and image of the Lord. You are unfit for any holy work, and do nothing that is truly pleasing to God. You are without any promise or assurance of his protection, and live in continual danger of his justice, not knowing what hour you may be snatched away to hell, and most certain to be damned if you die in that condition; and nothing short of conversion can prevent it. Whatever civilities, or amendments, or virtues are short of true conversion, will never procure the saving of your souls. Keep the true sense of this natural misery, and so of the necessity of conversion, on your hearts.

And then you must understand what it is to be converted; it is to have a new heart or disposition, and a new conversation.

1. Consider for what you must turn. For these ends following, which you may attain: 1. You shall immediately be made living members of Christ, and have an interest in him, and be renewed after the image of God, and be adorned with all his graces, and quickened with a new and heavenly life, and saved from the tyranny of Satan and the dominion of sin, and be justified from the curse of the law, and have the pardon of all the sins of your whole lives, and be accepted of God, and made his sons, and have liberty with boldness to call him Father, and go to him by prayer in all your needs, with a promise of acceptance; you shall have the Holy Ghost to dwell in you, to sanctify and guide you; you shall have part in the brotherhood, communion, and prayers of the saints; you shall be fitted for God's service, and be freed from the dominion of sin, and be useful, and a blessing to the place where you live; and shall have the promise of this life, and that which is to come: you shall want nothing that is truly good for you, and your necessary afflictions you will be enabled to bear; you may have some taste of communion with God in the Spirit, especially in all holy ordinances, where God prepareth a feast for your

souls; you shall be heirs of heaven while you live on earth, and may foresee by faith the everlasting glory, and so may live and die in peace; and you shall never be so low but your happiness will be incomparably greater than your misery.

How precious is every one of these blessings, which I do but briefly name, and which in this life you may receive!

And then, 2. At death your souls shall go to Christ, and at the day of judgment both soul and body shall be justified and glorified, and enter into your Master's joy, where your happiness will consist in these particulars:

(1.) You shall be perfected yourselves; your mortal bodies shall be made immortal, and the corruptible shall put on incorruption; you shall no more be hungry, or thirsty, or weary, or sick, nor shall you need to fear either shame, or sorrow, or death, or hell; your souls shall be perfectly freed from sin, and perfectly fitted for the knowledge, and love, and praises of the Lord.

(2.) Your employment shall be to behold your glorified Redeemer, with all your holy fellow-citizens of heaven, and to see the glory of the most blessed God, and to love him perfectly, and be beloved by him, and to praise him everlastingly.

(3.) Your glory will contribute to the glory of the new Jerusalem, the city of the living God, which is more than to have a private felicity to yourselves.

(4.) Your glory will contribute to the glorifying of your Redeemer, who will everlastingly be magnified and pleased in you that are the travail of his soul, and this is more than the glorifying of yourselves.

(5.) And the eternal Majesty, the living God, will be glorified in your glory, both as he is magnified by your praises, and as he communicateth of his glory and goodness to you, and as he is pleased in you, and in the accomplishment of his glorious work, in the glory of the Jerusalem, and of his Son.

All this the poorest beggar of you that is converted shall certainly and endlessly enjoy.

2. Next, you must understand **from what** you must turn; and this is, in a word, from your carnal self, which is the end of all the unconverted; from the flesh, that would be pleased before God, and would still be enticing you; from the world, that is the bait; and from the devil, that is the angler for souls, and the deceiver. And so from all known and wilful sins.

3. Next, you must know **to what** you must turn; and that is, to God, as your end; to Christ, as the way to the Father; to holiness, as the way appointed you by Christ; and to the use of all the helps and means of grace afforded you by the Lord.

4. Lastly, you must know **by what** you must turn; and that is by Christ, as the only Redeemer and Intercessor; and by the Holy Ghost, as the Sanctifier; and by the word, as his instrument or means; and by faith and repentance, as the means and duties on your part to be performed. All this is of necessity.

Direction II. If you will be converted and saved, be much in secret serious consideration. Inconsiderateness undoes the world. Withdraw yourselves oft into retired secresy, and there bethink you of the end why you were made, of the life you have lived, of the time you have lost, the sins you have committed; of the love, and sufferings, and fulness of Christ; of the danger you are in; of the nearness of death and judgment; of the certainty and excellency of the joys of heaven, and of the certainty and terror of the torments of hell, and the eternity of both; and of the necessity of conversion and a holy life. Absorb your hearts in such considerations as these.

Direction III. If you will be converted and saved, attend upon the word

of God, which is the ordinary means. Read the Scripture, or hear it read, and other holy writings that do apply it; constantly attend on the public preaching of the word. As God will lighten the world by the sun, and not by himself without it, so will he convert and save men by his ministers, who are the lights of the world. Acts 26:17, 18; Matt. 5:14. When he had miraculously humbled Paul, he sent Ananias to him, Acts 9:10, and when he had sent an angel to Cornelius, it was but to bid him send for Peter, who must tell him what to believe and do.

Direction IV. Betake yourselves to God in a course of earnest constant prayer. Confess and lament your former lives, and beg his grace to illuminate and convert you. Beseech him to pardon what is past, and to give you his Spirit, and change your hearts and lives and lead you in his ways, and save you from temptation. Pursue this work daily, and be not weary of it.

Direction V. Presently give over your known and wilful sins. Make a stand, and go that way no farther. Be drunk no more, but avoid the very occasion of it. Cast away your lusts and sinful pleasures with detestation. Curse, and swear, and rail no more; and if you have wronged any, restore, as Zaccheus did; if you will commit again your old sins, what blessing can you expect on the means for conversion?

Direction VI. Immediately, if possible, change your company, if it hath hitherto been bad; not by forsaking your necessary relations, but your unnecessary sinful companions; and join yourselves with those that fear the Lord, and inquire of them the way to heaven. Acts 9:26; Psalm 15:4.

Direction VII. Deliver up yourselves to the Lord Jesus, as the physician of your souls, that he may pardon you by his blood, and sanctify you by his Spirit, by his word and ministers, the instruments of the Spirit. He is the way, the truth, and the life; there is no coming to the Father but by him. John 14:6. Nor is there any other name under heaven by which you can be saved. Acts 4:12. Study, therefore, his person and natures, and what he hath done for you, and what he is to you, and what he will be, and how he is fitted to the supply of all your necessities.

Direction VIII. If you mean indeed to turn and live, do it speedily, without delay. If you be not willing to turn to-day, you are not willing to do it at all. Remember, you are all this while in your blood, under the guilt of many thousand sins, and under God's wrath, and you stand at the very brink of hell; there is but a step between you and death: and this is not a state for a man in his right mind to be quiet in. Up therefore presently, and fly as for your lives, as you would be gone out of your house if it were all on fire over your head. O, if you did but know in what continual danger you live, and what daily unspeakable loss you sustain, and what a safer and sweeter life you might live, you would not stand trifling, but presently turn. Multitudes miscarry that wilfully delay when they are convinced that it must be done. Your lives are short and uncertain; and what a case are you in, if you die before you thoroughly turn! You have stayed too long already, and wronged God too long. Sin getteth strength while you delay. Your conversion will grow more hard and doubtful. You have much to do, and therefore put not all off to the last, lest God forsake you, and give you up to yourselves, and then you are undone for ever.

Direction IX. If you will turn and live, do it unreservedly, absolutely, and universally. Think not to capitulate with Christ, and divide your heart between him and the world; and to part with some sins and keep the rest; and to let that go which your flesh can spare. This is but self-deluding; you must in heart and resolution forsake all that you have, or else you cannot be his disciples. Luke 14:26, 33. If you will not take God and heaven for your por-

tion, and lay all below at the feet of Christ, but must needs also have your good things here, and have an earthly portion, and God and glory are not enough for you, it is vain to dream of salvation on these terms; for it will not be. If you seem ever so religious, if yet it be but a carnal righteousness, and if the flesh's prosperity, or pleasure, or safety, be still excepted in your devotedness to God, this is as certain a way to death as open profaneness, though it be more plausible.

Direction X. If you will turn and live, do it resolvedly, and stand not still deliberating, as if it were a doubtful case. Stand not wavering, as if you were uncertain whether God or the flesh be the better master, or whether sin or holiness be the better way, or whether heaven or hell be the better end. But away with your former lusts, and presently, habitually, fixedly resolve. Be not one day of one mind and the next day of another; but be at a point with all the world, and resolvedly give up yourselves and all you have to God. Now, while you are reading, or hearing this, resolve; before you sleep another night, resolve; before you stir from the place, resolve; before Satan have time to take you off, resolve. You will never turn indeed till you do resolve, and that with a firm unchangeable resolution.

And now I have done my part in this work, that you may turn at the call of God and live. What will become of it I cannot tell. I have cast the seed at God's command; but it is not in my power to give the increase. I can go no further with my message; I cannot bring it to your heart, nor make it work; I cannot do your part for you, which is to entertain it and consider it; nor can I do God's part, by opening your heart to cause you to entertain it; nor can I show heaven or hell to your sight, nor give you new and tender hearts. If I knew what more to do for your conversion, I hope I should do it.

But O thou that art the gracious Father of spirits, thou hast sworn thou delightest not in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn and live; deny not thy blessing to these persuasions and directions, and suffer not thine enemies to triumph in thy sight, and the great deceiver of souls to prevail against thy Son, thy Spirit, and thy word. O pity poor, unconverted sinners, that have no hearts to pity themselves. Command the blind to see, and the deaf to hear, and the dead to live, and let not sin and death be able to resist thee. Awaken the secure, resolve the unresolved, confirm the wavering; and let the eyes of sinners, that read these lines, be next employed in weeping over their sins, and bring them to themselves, and to thy Son, before their sins have brought them to perdition. If thou say but the word, these poor endeavors shall prosper to the winning of many a soul to their everlasting joy and thine everlasting glory. **Amen.**

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 020 517 243 9